

The Text and the Myth of the Avant-Garde

Estera Milman

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c/o Rhode Island School of Design

Providence, RI 02903

Estera Milman

School of Art and Art History

AB W35

University of Iowa

Iowa City, IA 52242

By the turn of our century, the modernist, utopian concept of a cultural avant-garde was already seventy-five years old. The term itself, coined in 1825 by Saint-Simon during a period of extreme optimism, originally positioned the artist within a consortium of socially conscious individuals whose charge entailed a collective attempt to move culture ahead to a better future. Taking his or her place alongside the scientist and philosopher, the artist was perceived to be capable of making substantial contributions to the structuring of this new world. Having long since become specific to literary and artistic actions, the concept "avant-garde" had attained mythical status for artistic communities of the World War I era.

In his essay "The Logic of Interpretation" (originally published under the title "The Problem of Relevance in Esthetic Criticism"), Joseph Margolis persuasively argues that a myth is a schema of the imagination, a system of ideas that has "effectively captured a substantial part of society's habits of thinking and seeing" and that such myths, whether they be Catholic, Freudian, or Marxist, "pervade our experience in everyday life."¹ Margolis goes on to explain that it is not a question of the intrinsic validity of the specific set of ideas that have been given mythical status.

The clue to the puzzle is that, though Freudian psychology claims respectable scientific status, the imagery of psychoanalysis [for example] is not at all restricted to the boundaries of its accompanying science; on the

Bauhaus

100. Published during the year of its founding, the manifesto established the early philosophy of the Bauhaus and, although it seeks to reintegrate art and industrial production, illustrates a mystical dimension that is later abandoned in favor of an orientation geared almost exclusively to production.

100. Walter Gropius

Bauhaus Manifesto

Weimar, 1919

Manifesto, 32 x 19 cm., recto and verso.

*101. *Bauhaus ausstellung*

Weimar, 1923; Postcard announcements, 15 x 11 cm.

Karte 1, Lionel Feininger, July-October

Karte 2, Lionel Feininger, July-October

Karte 3, Wassily Kandinsky, July-September

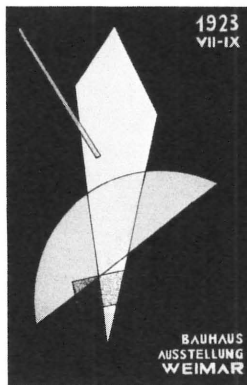
Karte 4, Paul Klee, July-September

Karte 5, Paul Klee, July-September

Karte 7, Ladislav Moholy-Nagy, July-September

Karte 8, Oskar Schlemmer, July-September

Karte 15, Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack, July-September



Catalogue # 101, Karte 7

contrary, it is so much a part of our general culture that the imagination both of artists and of semi-educated persons is saturated with it. We think, see, and imagine in terms of Freudian symbols, not merely because our subconscious selves employ them for ulterior ends—a debatable thesis in the science of psychology—but because our conscious selves have assimilated the fascinating perspective and fictions that Freud invented.²

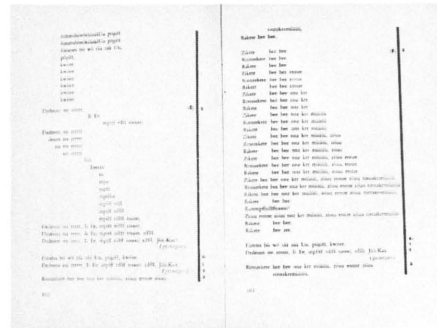
The numerous artistic avant-gardes of our century were aware, to one extent or another, that concepts of culture and cultural myths are most commonly communicated through texts. Some were further conscious that culture itself is a textual construct. In keeping with their mythical responsibility for social revisionism, the avant-garde logically turned to the text as a means through which to develop and to transmit their utopian vocabularies. Thus, an investigation of avant-garde texts provides access to the imagery of the specific fictions that saturated the consciousness of avant-garde communities, paradigms as diverse as natural order, the radical politicization of the arts, automatic procedure, and the viability of science and technology as mythical models for artistic action. It is interesting to note that an avant-garde's response to external crises of monumental proportion or to the crisis specific to the art community itself did not determine the level of formal innovation evident in their textual works. In the final analysis, the avant-garde's recurrent interaction with the text served as a means by which the myth of the artistic avant-garde itself was strengthened; it was through such interaction that they maintained their most pervasive fiction, the myth of functionality.

. . .

In June and July, 1914, just prior to the outbreak of World War I, Guillaume Apollinaire published a number of his "Calligrammes," a form of Cubist based, experimental typographical poetry in *Les Soirées de Paris*. These visual texts were concerned with the fusion of the visual image and the written word as well as with multiple perception and simultaneity. In May of 1916, the poet Tristan Tzara, one of the founding members of Zurich Dada, published a

98. Designed by Jan Tschichold and printed in sonata form, *Merz* (no. 24) reproduces the full score for Kurt Schwitters' "Ursonate", the performance of which would exceed the duration of thirty minutes. Schwitters was fond of presenting the piece in middleclass environments and it is widely reported that these performances were highly successful. The audience would experience incredible tension, at first, and would then achieve authentic release, liberation, and catharsis. According to such accounts, the pattern of audience response to the *Ursonate* performances would begin with civilized, controlled seriousness, move through uncontrollable laughter and tears, and finally culminate in a kind of communal exaltation.

- *98. Kurt Schwitters, editor
Merz (no. 24 "Ursonate")
 Hannover, Merzverlag, 1932
 Little review/score,
 21 x 14.5 cm., 34 pp.
 Inscribed "for GABO."



99. Kurt Schwitters, "Postcards"
 a. *Konstruktion für edle Frauen*
 Hannover, Hannover Papierwarenfabrik Richard Blumenthal, n.d.
 Postcard, 15 x 9 cm.
- b. *Das Lustgalen*
 Hannover, Verlag Paul Steegemann, n.d.
 Postcard, 15 x 9 cm.
- c. *Das Merzbild*
 Hannover, Hannover Papierwarenfabrik Richard Blumenthal, n.d.
 Postcard, 15 x 9 cm.

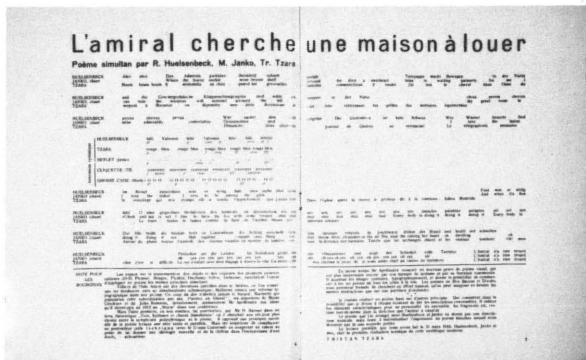


Figure 6

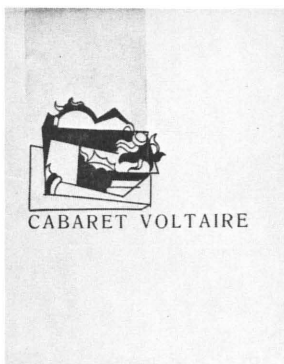


Figure 7

simultaneous sound poem and performance score entitled, "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer" (figure 6, cat. # 31), in Hugo Ball's *Cabaret Voltaire*, Zurich Dada's first little review (figure 7, cat. # 31). In his "Note pour les Bourgeois," which appeared below the piece itself and which attempted to explain simultaneity and visual poetry to a supposed "general audience," Tzara referred to Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* alongside his discussion of the experiments with simultaneity of other of his contemporaries; for example, Futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, whose language work "DUNE: 7.8. Parole in Libertà" (figure 8, cat. #31) also appeared in *Cabaret Voltaire*.

En même temps Mr Apollinaire essayait un nouveau genre de poèmes visuel, qui est plus intéressant encore par son manque de système et par sa fantasia tourmentée. Il accentue les images centrales, typographiquement, et donne la possibilité de commencer à lire un poème de tous les côtés à la fois.³

It is not too far fetched to assume that, within the context of the conservative World War I Zurich art world, the

simultaneous sound poem and performance score entitled, "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer" (figure 6, cat. # 31), in Hugo Ball's *Cabaret Voltaire*, Zurich Dada's first little review (figure 7, cat. # 31). In his "Note pour les Bourgeois," which appeared below the piece itself and which attempted to explain simultaneity and visual poetry to a supposed "general audience," Tzara referred to Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* alongside his discussion of the experiments with simultaneity of other of his contemporaries; for example, Futurist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, whose language work "DUNE: 7.8. Parole in Libertà" (figure 8, cat. #31) also appeared in *Cabaret Voltaire*.

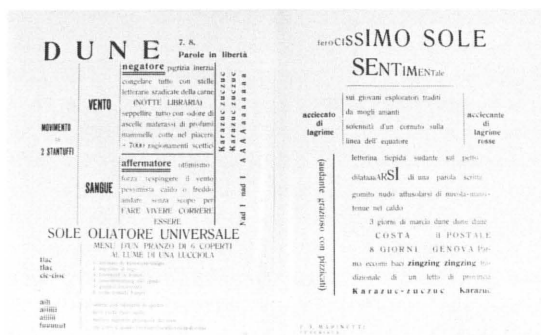
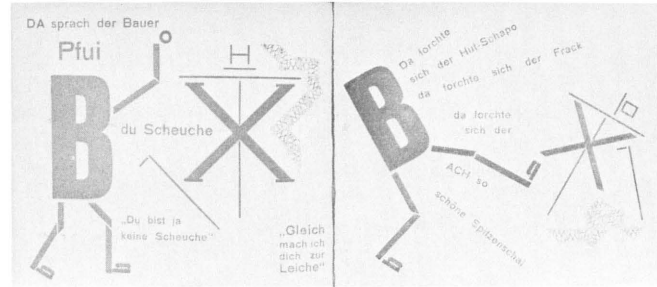


Figure 8

94. *The design of Merz (no. 14/15 "The Scarecrow")*, a typographical fairytale, was informed by international concerns about the need to develop a new children's literature and attempted to make a universal visual vocabulary accessible to children. Convinced that teachers and parents would not purchase such a publication if it appeared under the Merz imprint, Kurt Schwitters, Kate Steinitz, and Theo van Doesburg first released the issue under Apossvverlag and it was not until later that *The Scarecrow* was incorporated into the Merz series.

- *94. Kurt Schwitters, Theo van Doesburg, and Kate Steinitz, editors; *Merz (no. 14/15 "Die Scheuche")*
 Hannover, Apossvverlag, 1925
 Printed booklet, 24.5 x 20.5 cm., 12 pp.



95. Kurt Schwitters and Kate Steinitz
Die Märchen vom Paradies
 (Merz 16/17)
 Hannover, Apossvverlag, 1924
 Book, 27.5 x 21 cm., 32 pp.

96. Kurt Schwitters, editor; *Merz (no. 18/19)*
 Hannover, Merzverlag, January-April 1926
 Little review, 24 x 16 cm., 28 pp.

97. Kurt Schwitters, editor; *Merz (no. 21)*
 Hannover, Merzverlag, 1931
 Little review, 32 x 21.5 cm., 14 pp.

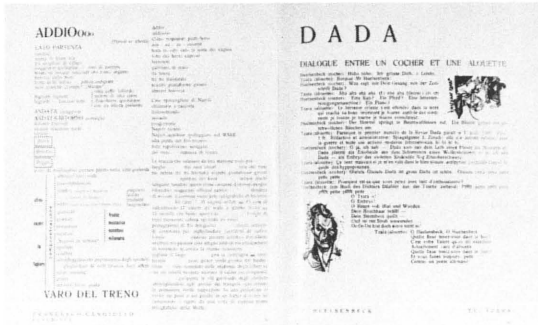


Figure 9



Figure 10

bourgeoisie to whom Tzara directed his note were artists assumed to be less sophisticated than the Zurich Dada group, itself a community of disenfranchised individuals who professed to have access to the cutting edge of international modernist innovation. The didactic tone of Tzara's note is clearly not directed toward a public beyond artistic and literary communities, since a more

general audience would, in all probability, have had little interest in the fineness of the points that Tzara so eloquently synthesizes. With the exception of two Italian Futurist contributions, the first by Marinetti and the second, entitled "DIOOO" (Parole in Libertà), by Francesco Cangiullo (figure 9, cat. # 31), *Cabaret Voltaire* was bilingual. Its literary contributions appeared in either French or German and sometimes in both, the two languages interwoven into one piece as, for example, in Richard Huelsenbeck's and Tzara's "DADA: Dialogue Entre un Cocher et une Alouette" (figure 9), a playful conversational attempt to provide a nonsensical definition of Dada.

Cabaret Voltaire was designed to serve as a textual elucidation of the activities and purpose of the artistic and literary cabaret which had served as the initial meeting place of the Zurich Dada group. Informed by utopian concepts of total theatre and the total work of art, the Cabaret Voltaire presented its public with a kaleidoscopic view of pan-European modernisms. The publication of the Zurich Dada circle's first journal was further intended to provide the group with an identity more specific to its members' own collective actions and intentions. In his straightforward editorial preface (figure 10, cat. # 31), Ball recounts the story of the birth of the cabaret, describes some of its performances and speaks of the relationship between its performers and the War. Ball closes his introduction by stating that the artists involved in the group intended to publish an international review that would be called "DADA (Dada) Dada Dada Dada Dada,"⁴ thus implying that the choice of title for Zurich Dada's first little review was designed to pay

92. Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky, editors
Merz (no. 8/9 "Nasci")
 Hannover, Paul Steegemann Verlag, April-July, 1924
 Little review, 30.5 x 29.2 cm., 18 pp.

- *93. Kurt Schwitters, editor, *Merz* (no. 11 "Pelikan")

93. *Merz* (no.11), a projection of projects for the Pelikan Ink Company, served as a prospectus for Kurt Schwitters' advertising and design firm.



Hannover, Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1925
 Little review, 29 x 22.2 cm., 8 pp.



Figure 11 (detail)

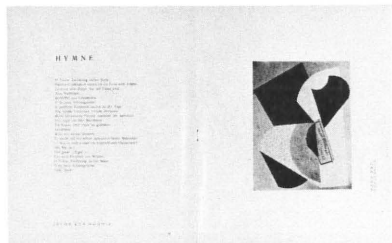


Figure 12

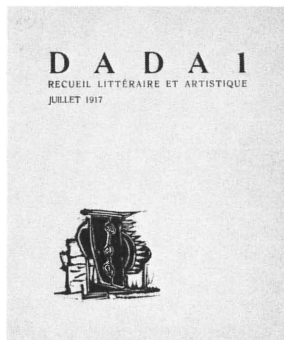


Figure 13

retroactive homage to the location that had birthed the movement. In keeping with such implied reverential intentions, the layout of *Cabaret Voltaire* is formal, elegant and respectful of the works that it illustrates. The little review is subtitled, *Eine Sammlung Künstlerischer und Literarischer Beiträge* and, through its formal presentation of self, falls neatly within the tradition of the art press. It is the works that the review illustrates that are given responsibility for activating the journal's pages; for example, the visual texts already discussed and the reproductions of Emmy Hennings' puppets (figure 11, cat. # 31), Marcel Janco's woodcut poster for *Chant Nègre*, and the collages of Hans (Jean) Arp (figure 12, cat. # 31) and Otto van Rees. Although the cutlines for the latter two images are printed vertically rather than horizontally and thus test

the standard, they provide the only exceptions that even superceptions that even superficially attempt to do so. On June 24, 1917, Apollinaire's play, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, subtitled "a surrealist drama in two acts and a prologue," was performed in Paris. Zurich Dada's second little review appeared in July of that year, under Tzara's supervision. As Ball had predicted in his preface to *Cabaret Voltaire*, the journal was entitled

Dada 1 (Recueil Littéraire et Artistique) (figure 13, cat. # 40). In December, 1917, *Dada 2* (cat. # 41) appeared in print. Tzara once again makes reference to Apollinaire's work in this issue and, under the heading "Notes", a section of the journal that fills five pages wherein mention is made of new developments in avant-garde art and literature, he writes, "A la manifestation de la revue *Sic* du 24 Juin, Apollinaire fit jouer son drame surréaliste *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*."⁵ It is interesting to note that, despite the change in title, *Dada 1* and *Dada 2* are as conventional in their design as was their precursor, *Cabaret Voltaire*. In all three cases, the formal model for these reviews appears to be other contemporaneous journals of art and literature. What is also apparent from these publications is the fact that, even during the height of World War I, it was through such a publishing network that artists maintained some contact with one another and with the progress of one another's art making activities.

89. Designed by El Lissitzky, the announcement/poster advertises the Merz and Dada performance of Kurt Schwitters' "Anna Blume" and Raoul Hausmann's "Wang-Wang Blues," and announces the mounting of a revolution in Revon.

*89. El Lissitzky, *Merz-Matinéen*

Hannover,

1923-1925

Printed announcement,

22. 9 x 27.9 cm.



90. Kurt Schwitters

Werbe-Gestaltung

Hannover, 1923

Booklet in envelope, 14.5 x 11 cm.

91. During the years 1923-1932, Kurt Schwitters published numerous issues of the periodical Merz. Alongside Schwitters' own works, the journal reproduced works and statements by an international roster of progressive artists from throughout Europe and Russia. Merz (no. 4) includes contributions by Tristan Tzara, George Ribemont-Dessaignes, Philippe Soupault, Theo van Doesburg, Laslo Moholy-Nagy, Hans (Jean) Arp, El Lissitzky, and Schwitters.

91. Kurt Schwitters, editor, *Merz* (no. 4)

Hannover, Paul Steegemann Verlag, July 1923

Little review, 22.5 x 14.5 cm., 15 pp.



Figure 14

In 1924, almost two years after the initial rift between Tzara and André Breton signalled the demise of Paris Dada and the establishment of Surrealism in its stead, Breton's *La Manifeste Surréaliste* was published. That same year, the first issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* (figure 14, cat. # 115), Pierre Naville and Benjamin Peret, editors, appeared in print. It has been suggested that the periodical's static and severe format was derived from *La Nature*, a popular scientific journal of the period and that the formality of the Surrealist journal's format paralleled Breton's preference for scientific, rather than literary, models for his early experiments with automatism.⁶ Breton's choice of a scientific paradigm over a literary or artistic equivalent can perhaps be explained by again making reference to Margolis' thesis which states that independent myths are applicable to experience beyond their original areas of influence precisely because their strength "undoubtedly is fed by the conviction that they subtend true accounts of human conduct, that is, that they are capable of being formulated as science."⁷ Despite the intentional severity of *La Révolution Surréaliste's* format, the journal did include photographs in its first three numbers, issues which were dedicated to a "new declaration of the rights of man" and which contained neither poetry nor prose.⁸ Subsequent numbers of the periodical were edited by Breton and continued to include numerous photographic images alongside other visual works. However, the acceptance of photographic imagery even in the periodical's initial numbers is understandable in view of the longstanding agreement among artists, poets, and public alike, of the direct relationship between camera images, reality, verisimilitude, historical evidence and "scientific" proof, and particularly so in view of the fact that Surrealism itself has been described as a kind of photography of the mind.

In March of 1915, the first issue of the American review, *291* appeared in print, Alfred Steiglitz, Maurius de Zayas, Paul Haviland and Agnes Ernst Meyer, editors. The periodical, purportedly modeled after Apollinaire's *Les Soirées de Paris*, preceded the publication of *Cabaret Voltaire* by more than a year, and *La Révolution Surréaliste* by little less than a decade. Published in triptych format

(figure 15, cat. # 69), the journal's first number coincided with some of the later issues of Stieglitz's internationally circulated periodical, *Camera Work*, the first number of which had appeared in January, 1903. As would later be the case for *Cabaret Voltaire*, the title of the New York journal was a tribute to a place, in this case, Steiglitz's famous 291 Gallery, around which the American, as well as the visiting European avant-garde, had long gathered. Similarly, as would be the case for the editors of *La Révolution Sur-réaliste*, the editors of *291* (no. 1), in particular de Zayas, Haviland, and Meyer, were representative of a community of artists and poets eager to embrace "scientific method," as such was understood, on a vernacular level, by an educated lay public.

The preface to *291* (no. 1) was authored by Meyer and entitled, "How Versus Why" (figure 16, cat. # 69). Throughout the article, the author emphasizes those points that she feels are essential to her argument by upper casing them. These typographical shifts are the only even mildly unconventional aspects of the text, which is the only obviously conservative page of the otherwise visually experimental journal. In the article, Meyer insists that American art critics reject their obsolete romantic methods, based as they are in normative aesthetics, and replace these "old standards" with what the author identifies as the new "SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM," a criticism more applicable to those contemporary works that have responded to the "SCIENTIFIC INFLUENCE IN ART."⁹ She begins by describing the art criticism that appeared in the American journals of the period as "unintelligent twaddle" that unfortunately "is

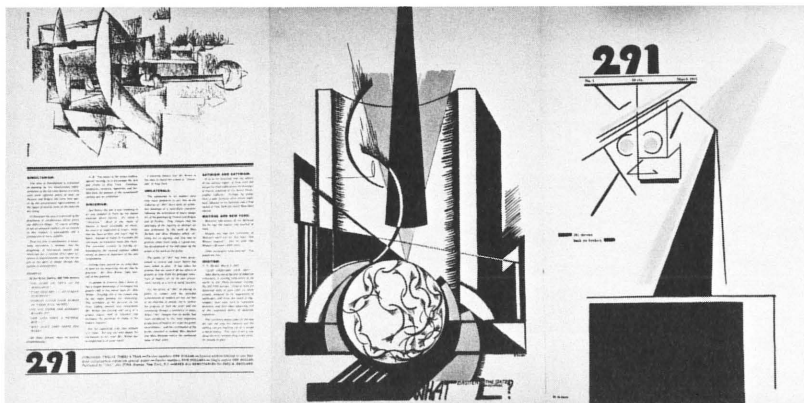


Figure 15

Hannover Dada

*85. Kurt Schwitters; *Anna Blume, Dichtungen*

Hannover, Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1919

Book, 19 x 13 cm., 82 pp.

No. 39/40 of Die Silbergaüle,

Hand illuminated special cover.



86. Kurt Schwitters, *Die Kathedrale*
Hannover,
Paul Steegemann Verlag, 1920
Book, 22.5 x 14.5 cm., 16 pp.
Volume 41/42 of Die Silbergaüle.

87. Kurt Merz Schwitters
Elementar, Die Blume Anna
Berlin, Der Sturm Verlag, 1922
Book, 23 x 15.2 cm., 32 pp.

not as harmless as it is silly for the written word influences even the wary, particularly if it is printed in a publication of standing and most people are perfectly willing to think about art in terms of their favorite newspaper." Meyer explains that, although criticism has failed to do so, "ART HAS ALWAYS PROGRESSED AS THOUGHT HAS PROGRESSED," and that although the "scientific influence has at last invaded the field of art... its critics still wander blissfully in the land of romance." She then presents Ruskin's proposition that because the religious function of art has passed away the "painter has no profession, no purpose," has become "an idler on earth chasing the shadows of his fancies," and would best serve culture through devoting himself to the "recording of objects of historical interest or beauty existing in his own period." Meyer responds by explaining that art has not only passed through its religious period, but through its "photographic era," as well, and has finally begun to be influenced by "the reasoning and scientific era," an evolution that has led to "A PERFECTLY CONNECTED CHAIN FROM APPLIED TO PURE REASON." For Meyer, the effect of this shift upon the "aesthetically emotional world" of her period was equivalent to what had "happened to thought in the middle ages when reason, rediscovered, took the religiously emotional world by storm." Her plea to contemporary art critics, if it can be believed to be such, was based on her belief that, if the critic could "assume a constructive attitude," artist and critic could join forces and collectively "WORK CONSCIOUSLY TO HELP BUILD A BETTER FUTURE." Although "How Versus Why" makes repeated reference to, and provides direct evidence of, the extent to which the myth of scientific method had pervaded the consciousness of an art community involved in utopian experimentation, Meyer seems at least somewhat aware of the limitations inherent in accepting an external paradigm as an absolute model and closes her essay with the projection that it is possible that, in this better future, a new art could evolve "that would be NOT THE PRODUCT OF FOREIGN LAWS BUT A LAW UNTO ITSELF."

For the most part, neither the Surrealists nor the 291 group had primary access to the internal mechanics of scientific experiment or thought. They were, after all, poets

83. Marcel Duchamp, *Rose Sélavy*
Paris, Éditions G.L.M., 1939
Book, 16 x 12 cm., 20 pp.

84. The historically based show produced a major impact upon the members of the post World War II American avant-garde and signalled the resurgence of interest in the Dada movement. The exhibition included over 212 works by individuals who had participated in the Berlin, Hannover, Paris, Cologne, and Zurich manifestations of the movement. Its catalogue, which also served as the show's poster and announcement, was available to visitors to the gallery in the form of a crumpled ball.

- *84. Marcel Duchamp
Dada 1916-1923
New York, April 15 - May 9, 1953
Catalog and poster, 95 x 62 cm.
Dada exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery
organized by Marcel Duchamp.



and artists by profession and, as such, were affected by the mythical status of science in much the same way that other educated members of the lay public were influenced by the myth's pervasiveness. It is interesting to note, however, that both the American modernists of 1915, and the French avant-garde of 1924 were able to accept aspects of this same myth as models for their artistic and literary actions based, in part, on certain similarities between the context within which they worked as artists. At the time that *291* (no. 1) appeared in print, America had not yet entered the War and, as a result, American artists were living through what can perhaps be described as the last stages of pre-World War optimism, a period of time often referred to as the "heroic years" of the Modern period. The crisis to which these artists responded was internal to their positions as members of a specific modern art community. By 1924, the Paris based Surrealists were participating in the reconstructive stage of the post-World War I European art world. The external crisis to which art communities had responded during the War had dissipated. For the Surrealists, crisis had once again become art based, that is to say, specific to the internal problematics of the art community itself. Reference is made, in the preface to *291* (no. 1), to another pervasive schema of ideas: the usefulness of the text for the propagation and dissemination of avant-garde ideology. This myth of the text pervaded the experience of the *291* group, the Surrealists, Dadaists, Expressionists, Constructivists, and Futurists to an equal extent.

Although in her editorial preface to *291* (no. 1), Agnes Ernst Meyer speaks of the power of the written word to influence even the wary, particularly when presented within the context of a publication of standing or a favorite newspaper, it is unlikely that she, or any of the other editors of the New York based little review, were attempting to combat the popular press on its own terms. It is ludicrous to assume that the periodical was perceived to be anything but an art journal, albeit an innovative one, and that the audience to which it was directed was anything but an audience of artists, writers, and other individuals interested in "new" developments within the arts and literature. It was in its self-proclaimed commitment to the "reportage" of the new and the experimental to its specific audience that *291*



Figure 16

*81. Marcel Duchamp, *Obligations pour la Roulette de Monte Carlo (Monte Carlo Bond)*

81. Marcel Duchamp issued the edition of this lithograph for sale as bonds. Critics and collectors of the period responded by stating that, because the bonds were Duchamp works, they were, in fact, tremendously sound investments. Through their sale, Duchamp raised sufficient funds to travel to Monte Carlo where he attempted to apply a theory that he had developed to the roulette tables. After a prolonged stay, Duchamp claimed to have broken even.



Paris, 1924

Photomontage on colored lithograph, 19.7 x 31.1 cm., recto and verso

Photograph of Duchamp by Man Ray.

*82 Marcel Duchamp,

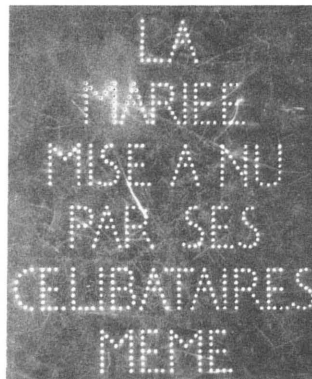
La Mariée Mise à Nu Par Ses Célibataires Même (The Green Box)

Paris, Éditions Rose Sélavy,

1934

Boxed collection
of documents,

33 x 28 x 2.5 cm.



82. The Green Box consists of a collection of facsimiles compiled by Marcel Duchamp from his notes for *The Large Glass*, notes and sketches spanning a period from approximately 1912 through the early twenties. Duchamp made templates from his originals and carefully matched their paper, state of decomposition, etc. However, because the resulting facsimiles were boxed in random order, Duchamp deliberately avoided fixing any particular interpretive scheme that could be applied from the box back to the glass.

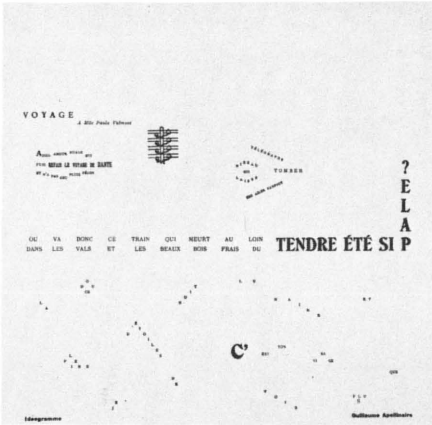


Figure 17

(no. 1), or *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Dada 1*, and *Dada 2* for that matter, paralleled in function the mechanics of the more broadly based popular press. The New York based review shared this aspect of its intention and some of its contents with the later Zurich journals, although its format and formal presentation of self were very different. Unlike the Dada reviews, the American periodical succeeded in integrating its content within a format that was more in keeping with the works and the position statements that it presented. As such, 291 (no. 1), despite the fact that it was precursory to the Swiss journals, fits more squarely, than do the Dada issues, within what we have been trained

to believe are the criteria by which one can identify an interaction between the avant-garde and the text.

As has been mentioned, 291 (no. 1), (figure 15), was published in triptych format. The front cover is composed of Maurius de Zayas' "abstract caricature" of Alfred Stieglitz entitled, *291 throws back its forelock*. Edward Steichen's, *What is Rotten in the State of Denmark?* appears on the back cover. The inside fold carries Picasso's *Oil and Vinegar Castor* (printed horizontally across the page) beneath which a series of serious, semi-serious, and nonsensical discussions of such concepts as "Simutanism," "Sincerism," "Unilaterals," "Satirism and Satyrism," "Matisse and New York," and "Idiotism" appear. The initial inside page is committed to Meyers' "How Versus Why" (figure 16), a contribution that has already been discussed at great length and which is presented in a completely straightforward fashion, in keeping with the kind of contribution that it professes to be; the center inside page (figure 17, cat. # 69) contains an Idéogramme by Guillaume Apollinaire and a prose piece by Stieglitz entitled, "One Hour's Sleep—Three Dreams"; and the final page (figure 18, cat. # 69), a dialogue between the "Spirit" of 291 and the "Professor," signed by Paul B. Haviland, and similar in both presentation and intention to Tristan Tzara's and Richard Huelsenbeck's "DADA: Dialogue Entre un Cocher et une Alouette" (figure 9), that would appear one year later in *Cabaret Voltaire*.

The last issue of 291 was published in February 1916, a

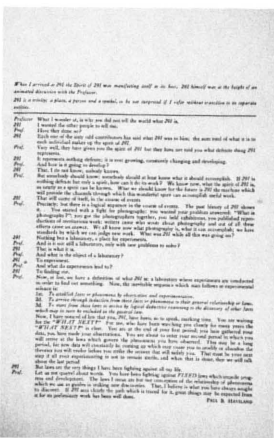


Figure 18

79. Published in response to both the collapse of André Breton's *Congress of Paris* and to Francis Picabia's publication of the little review *La Pomme de Pins* (March 1922), *Le Coeur à Barbe* attacked most of the Dadaists who stood in Breton's camp. The journal signifies the final demise of Paris Dada. Alongside Tristan Tzara's contributions, the review includes works and statements by Marcel Duchamp, Matthew Josephson, Paul Eluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Erik Satie, Philippe Soupault, and others. Erik Satie's contribution consisted of a sketch for his "Office de la domesticité", a score composed of variations on the theme "M. André Breton is not the domestic for M. Ozenfant".

*79. Tristan Tzara, editor (with Paul Eluard and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes)

Le Coeur à Barbe

(no. 1, *Journal Transparent*)

Paris, Au sans Pareil, April 1922

Little review, 22.5 x 14 cm., 8 pp.



80. Tristan Tzara, *Le Coeur à gaz*

Paris, Arts-litho, 1923/1977

Book object, 21 x 44.5 cm., 51 pp.

Seven lithographs by Sonia Delaunay.

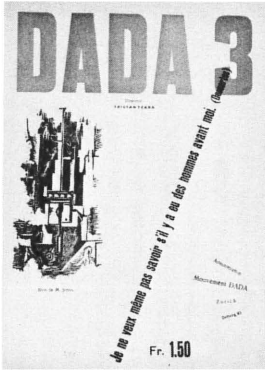


Figure 19



Figure 20

date that ironically coincides with the establishment of the Dada group in Zurich. It has been suggested that Tzara may well have received a copy of the review in November of that year.¹⁰ It has also been suggested that the drastic form-al change in format evident in issues of *Dada* subsequent to *Dada 2* was somehow related to the influence of Francis Picabia, although the artist was not to visit Zurich until early 1919, at which time issue number 8 of his periodical 391, (named in memory of Picabia's involvement with 291 while in residence in New York) was published. Picabia had contributed to the December 1918 issue *Dada 3* (figure 19, cat. # 42), a publication that appeared in an enlarged and typographically visually activated format. The periodical opens with Tzara's "Manifeste Dada 1918" (figure 20, cat.# 42) announcing clearly that Dada has found its voice as a movement. Picabia's relatively minor contributions to the periodical consisted of an obituary for Guillaume Apollinaire (which followed another by Tzara), a poem entitled, "Salive Americaine," an announcement for Picabia's new book *Poèmes et Dessins de la Fille née Sans Mère*, and a mechano-morphic drawing entitled *ABRI*.

Gabrielle Buffet Picabia has stated that her husband received a letter from Tzara in 1918, soon after *Poèmes et Dessins de la Fille née Sans Mère* appeared in print, inviting him to join the Dada circle. Amused by Tzara's invitation, the two traveled from Lausanne to Zurich in early 1919.¹¹ However, Hans Richter recalled that Picabia's influence on the Zurich Dadaists preceded his physical arrival.

The exhibition at the Galerie Wolfsberg in September 1918 marked the end of this period of "balance" within Dada ...In a dark room on the other side of the gallery from our brightly-lit exhibition hung a series of pictorially almost disembodied "machine pictures" mainly, as I recall, in gold and black. They were by a Spaniard then unknown to me, Francis Picabia. ...Shortly afterwards, Picabia himself arrived in Zurich with his talented wife Gabrielle Buffet. Viewed in retrospect, Picabia's arrival marks the end of an era in the history of Zurich Dada.¹²

This pivotal encounter between Picabia's "machine pictures" and Richter, Marcel Janco, Fritz Baumann, McCouch, Emmy Hennings, and Otto Morach was not Dada's first introduction to a mechanistic schema of ideas. The Zurich circle

77. *The announcement refers to the first of a series of visits to undistinguished and unnoteworthy places throughout Paris that the Dadaists planned to organize. The complaints initiated by the tedium inherent to the event itself were further intensified by the fact that the excursion took place in the rain and its participants were forced to track through mud-puddles.*

77. Tristan Tzara
Excursions et Visites Dada
Paris, Église Saint Julien-le-Pauvre,
Thursday, April 14, 1921
Announcement,
28 x 22 cm.

78. *Arranged for the most part by André Breton, the trial of Maurice Barrès was designed to serve as the first of a series of such events that would bring a variety of influential, conservative French literary and artistic figures to trial on the charge of abusing the human spirit. Barrès was represented by a dummy during the proceedings. Tristan Tzara, who took the role of witness during the trial, attempted to undermine and trivialize the seriousness of Breton's purpose by making jokes. The event also marked Francis Picabia's withdrawal from the Dada movement.*

- *78. *Mise en accusation et jugement de M. Maurice Barrès par Dada*
Paris, Salle des Sociétés Savantes,
May 15, 1921
Announcement,
32.5 x 24 cm.

had published Italian Futurist works in *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Dada 1*, and *Dada 2*, and were thoroughly familiar with the Futurist's technomania and their belief in the aesthetic dynamism of the machine. Picabia's pictures, on view at the Galerie Wolfsberg, provided a new visual reification of the already influential paradigm of a machine aesthetic, a concretization, as it were, of a myth that had survived the catastrophic realities of the first World War. Richter's statement implies that the innovative formal translation of this paradigm, as it was made evident in Picabia's work, marked the end of the tentative, "balanced," preliminary stage of Zurich Dada.

Dada 4/5 (Anthologie Dada) (cat. # 43), which appeared in May 1919, was a direct collaboration between Picabia and Tzara and fulfills an even greater number of our formal expectations for the early twentieth century avant-garde text. The little review has both an inside and an outside cover: the first bearing a biomorphic woodcut by Arp (figure 21, cat. # 43), a number of earlier examples of which had first been reproduced in *Dada 3*; the second, a mechanistic drawing by Picabia (figure 22, cat. # 43), purportedly made by dipping the cog wheels of a clock in ink. Works such as Picabia's suggestive drawing entitled, *Mouvement Dada/391* (figure 23, cat. # 43), and Arp's untitled woodcut (figure 24, cat. # 43), are reproduced throughout the anthology and make clear and direct reference to the fact that Dada was simultaneously effected by both the paradigm of natural order and by a mechanistic alternative, two schemata of ideas that appear to stand in direct opposition to one another. It is in this very juxtaposition of two contradictory myths that we are made aware of Dada's deep utopian intentions, its ongoing search for alternatives to those cultural constructs held culpable for the War.

However, it is wrong headed to assume that the last two Zurich numbers of *Dada*, despite their innovative formats or their mechanomorphic images, were directed toward, or seriously affected, a public outside the arts and the humanities. As had been the case for *291* and as would be the case for the official Berlin Dada publications, the little reviews *Club Dada*, *Der Dada* (no.1), *Der Dada* (no. 2) and *Der Dada* (no. 3) (cat. #s 46, 59, 60, and 61), the audience to which the reviews speak remains the same, despite the fact that the external imperatives that inform their production change



Figure 21



Figure 22

*74. Francis Picabia, *Manifestation Dada*; Paris, Maison de l'Oeuvre, Salle Berlioz



Saturday, March 17, 1920

Program, 37 x 27 cm., (1 leaf).

75. Paul Dermée, *Z* (special issue)

Paris, Au sans Pareil, 1920

Little review, 22 x 17 cm.

and 21 x 33 cm., 6 pp.,

Hectographed.

76. Francis Picabia and Philippe Soupault, *Dada Soulève Tout*

Paris, Au sans Pareil, January 12, 1921

Broadside manifesto, 28 x 21.5 cm., recto and verso.

71. Tristan Tzara, editor

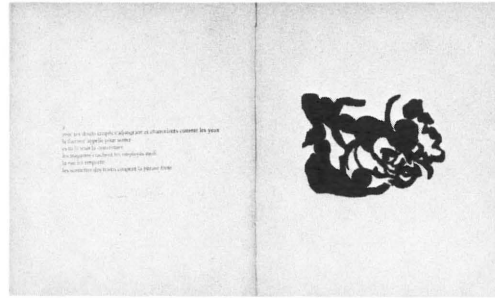
Dada 7 (Dadaphone)

Paris, March 1920

Little review, 27 x 19 cm., 8 pp.

72. A collaboration between one of our century's most influential poets and one of its most respected visual artists, the book is considered to be one of the most successful examples of early twentieth century book art. Printed in Paris, on varied papers, *Cinéma calendrier du coeur abstrait maisons*, served as the renewal of the Zurich based collaborations between Hans (Jean) Art and Tristan Tzara and appeared under the Collection Dada imprint.

+ *72. Tristan Tzara, *Cinéma calendrier du coeur abstrait maisons*



Paris, Collection Dada, 1920

Book, 25 x 21 cm., 80 pp.

19 woodcuts by Hans (Jean) Arp.

73. Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, *Circuit total par la lune et par la couleur*

Paris, n.d., ca. 1920

Poem and woodcut, 29 x 23 cm., 4 pp. (1 folded sheet).

Cover by Marcel Janco.

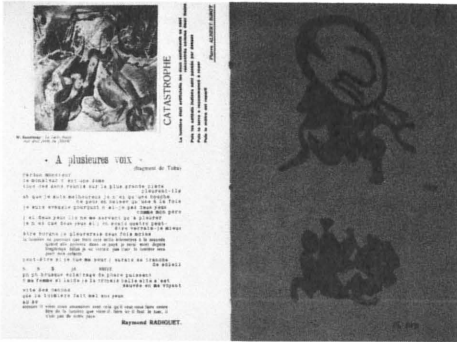


Figure 24

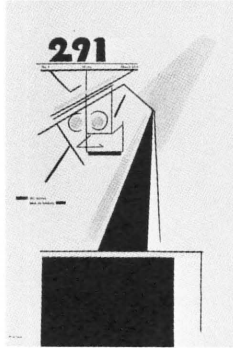
their own, and worked both. In the final analysis, however, it is through their little reviews, directed as they were to the mechanics of the internal culture of the art community, that they best strengthened the myth of the avant-garde while at the same time consolidating the strength of the community's sense of self. Thus, in her 1915 essay "How Versus Why," Agnes Ernst Meyer makes reference to the most influential myth that was to pervade the experience of numerous early twentieth century

avant-garde communities when she insists that critic and artists join together and "WORK CONSCIOUSLY TO HELP BUILD A BETTER FUTURE." It was within the context of their own little reviews that avant-garde artists could best build a visual vocabulary that mirrored their ideological and culturally critical intentions; it was there that they could develop the iconology so central to the function and survival of the twentieth century avant-garde itself.

Dada and Surrealism have themselves risen to mythical status and, as a result, pervade our experience in the present. That such is the case was not based upon their interaction with, or initial effect upon, mass culture at large, but rather was the direct result of their intense ongoing dialogue with the arts and the humanities, an interaction that, in the long run, affects our very concept of culture itself. As George Kubler has stated in *The Shape of Time*, "Useful inventions alter mankind only indirectly by altering his environment; aesthetic inventions enlarge human awareness directly with new ways of experiencing the universe, rather than with new objective interpretations."¹⁵ As Thomas S. Kuhn illustrates in his influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*,¹⁶ science, which according to Margolis is the very discipline evoked as the means by which the persuasiveness of a particular myth is itself determined, is also affected by the rise and fall of its own paradigms. I am reminded of a statement by Feuerabend, the brilliant philosopher of science, who, in the 1970s, purportedly addressed what he perceived to be a naive, realist perception of his own field by insisting that he would prefer to be remembered as a Dadaist.

New York / Paris Dada

69. *The periodical 291 was named after Alfred Stieglitz's famous 291 Gallery in New York, a long time gathering place for the American and the visiting European avant-garde. Loosely influenced by such publications as Guillaume Apollinaire's Les Soirees de Paris, 291 was visually experimental in design and international in scope. The little review ran to twelve numbers before it ceased publication in 1916 and provides an invaluable record of the intentions and activities of the American moderns of the period. Despite the fact that it ceased publication at approximately the same time that Dada was first established in Zurich, 291 has come to be regularly included in the cannon of Dada publications.*



- *69. Alfred Stieglitz, Marius de Zayas,
Paul Haviland and Agnes Ernst Meyer, editors
291 (no. 1)
New York, March 1915
Little review, 44 x 29 cm., 6 pp.
folded in triptych format
Covers by Marius de Zayas and Edward Steichen.

70. *Bulletin Dada was published within weeks of Tristan Tzara's arrival in Paris, early in 1920. Although it appeared in large format, the little review consisted of only one folded sheet. The evening of performances and manifestations for which it served as program indicates the performance basis of Tzara's participation in Paris Dada.*

70. Tristan Tzara, editor
Dada 6 (Bulletin Dada)
Paris, February 1920
Little review, 38 x 28 cm., 4 pp.
Served as the program for the Salon des Indépendants
Grand des Champs-Élysées

NOTES

1. Joseph Margolis, "The Logic of Interpretation," in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts*, Joseph Margolis, ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 112-113.
2. *Ibid.* p. 113.
3. Tristan Tzara, "Note pour les Bourgeois," in *Cabaret Voltaire*, Hugo Ball, ed., (Zurich, 1916), pp. 6-7.
4. Hugo Ball, *Cabaret Voltaire*, p. 5.
5. Tristan Tzara, *Dada 2* (Zurich, 1917), p. 17.
6. Jane Beckett, "Dada and Surrealism," in *The Art Press*, Trevor Fawcett & Clive Phillpot, eds., (London, 1976), p. 38.
7. Margolis, p. 114.
8. See Beckett, p. 38.
9. Agnes Ernst Meyer, "How Versus Why," in *291* (no. 1), Alfred Stieglitz, Maurius de Zayas, Paul Haviland, and Agnes Ernst Meyer, eds., (New York, 1915), p. 1. All quotes in this paragraph come directly from Meyer's editorial preface to the New York based little review.
10. Ileana B. Leavens, *From "291" to Zurich the Birth of Dada* (Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 126.
11. Gabriele Buffet-Picabia, cited in Elmer Peterson, *Tristan Tzara* (New Brunswick, 1971), p. 56.
12. Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti Art* (New York and Toronto, 1965), p. 75. It is important to note that Picabia's machines were dysfunctional constructions. Inherent dysfunctionality is essential to an understanding of Picabia's World War I era machine pictures.
13. Morse Peckham, "Art and Disorder," in *Esthetics Contemporary*, Richard Kostelanetz, ed., (Buffalo, 1978), pp. 97-98.
14. Tristan Tzara, "Zurich Chronicle 1915-1919," trans. Ralph Manheim, in Hans Richter, p. 28.
15. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time, Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven and London, 1962), p. 65.
16. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1970).

Estera Milman is Director of The University of Iowa's Alternative Traditions in the Contemporary Arts and Program Coordinator of the Fine Arts Dada Archive and Research Center. Her past publications include: "Dada New York: An Historiographic Analysis" (1985), "Photomontage, the Event, and Historism" (1988), Fluxus and Friends (1988), and "Through the Looking Glass: Dada and the Contemporary Arts" (1988).

Cologne Dada

67. "Die Schammade (dilettanten erhebt euch)"

Cologne, n.d.

Flyer announcing the publication of *Die Schammade*, 29 x 21 cm., 1 leaf.

- *68. Johannes Baargeld and Max Ernst, editors

Die Schammade

Cologne, Schloemilch Verlag, 1920

Little review, 32.5 x 25 cm.,

32 pp.

Cover by Hans (Jean) Arp.

68. *Die Schammade* was published in conjunction with the infamous 1920 Cologne Spring Bauhaus Exhibition, often considered to be the most scandalous Cologne Dada event. The periodical stands as evidence for the collaborative activities of Johannes Baargeld (pseudonym of Alfred Gruenwald), Max Ernst, and Hans (Jean) Arp. Although it includes contributions by Berlin Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck and by members of the Cologne based Group *Stupid*, the periodical is predominately French in orientation in response to Arp and Ernst's shared interest in relocating in Paris.

