

Dada Periodicals at Iowa

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Dada—the literary and artistic movement that began in Zurich during World War I—differed from previous artistic movements in its insistence on the ephemeral nature of its activities. Dada started as a vehement reaction to the slaughter and destruction that had engulfed Europe.¹ The Dadaists believed that the cataclysm of the Great War was the inevitable result of the stale, corrupt, nationalistic cultural values of European civilization and its political, philosophical, and artistic traditions. Refugees from the carnage that was taking place beyond the borders of neutral Switzerland, the Dadaists set out to demolish these values and traditions. The thrust of Dada was to force audiences to question all traditions, all artistic forms and formulas, including even the language on which all literature and all thought were based; they did not aim to set up new canons, new formulas, and new truisms to take the place of the old.

The means that the Dadaists employed in pursuing these ends were highly ephemeral in nature. The most typically Dada gestures were unique actions intended to surprise, shock, and

¹ The corpus of published literature on Dada is enormous. Among the best introductions in English for the general reader are memoirs of the Dadaists themselves: *Flight Out of Time* by Hugo Ball, translated by Ann Raimés (New York: Viking Press, 1974), *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* by Richard Huelsenbeck, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Viking Press, 1974), and *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* by Hans Richter, translated by David Britt (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1965). Another important overview is *Dada: Monograph of a Movement*, ed. Willy Verkauf (1957; rpt. London: Academy Editions, 1975). Finally, two excellent sources are products of the Dada conference and exhibition held at The University of Iowa in 1978: the exhibition catalog *Dada Artifacts* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Museum of Art, 1978) and the collection of essays *Dada Spectrum*, ed. Stephen C. Foster and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (Madison: Coda Press; Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1979).

provoke; these gestures were therefore essentially unrepeatable. The visitor to a Dada performance in Zurich, Paris, or Berlin could not know what to expect. Even the printed programs were sometimes designed to mislead the audience in its expectations. If the visitors reacted with violent outrage at being misled, so much the better, for a polite, docile, complacent audience would defeat the very purpose of the event. Besides these "formal" theatrical events (formal only in their being presented on a stage before a paying audience), the Dadaists carried out their program through a variety of more radical public manifestations, precursors of the guerrilla theater of the sixties. In Germany, Johannes Baader disrupted services at the Berlin Cathedral, as well as the new national assembly at Weimar. At the height of the German revolution, several Dadaists proclaimed a bogus "Dada Republic" in one district of Berlin. Members of the Parisian contingent organized parodies of guided tours, held at sites chosen because they were totally devoid of interest. In Cologne, a Dada exhibition was held not in a museum or gallery, but in the courtyard of a brewery and could be entered only through the men's restroom. Dada pamphlets and broadsides were distributed on city streets or showered from church balconies. Mock advertisements and announcements were inserted in newspapers.

Paradoxically, but inevitably, most of the surviving work of the Dadaists—the paintings and sculptures, the poems and novels, the films and photomontages—misrepresents the movement in its essential aspect of ephemerality. On the other hand, other sorts of documents—programs, announcements, manifestos, correspondence, and so forth—can give us only a fragmentary outline of what a Dada event must have been like.

Of all the surviving documentation, it is the motley assortment of Dada periodicals that can best give us a taste of the variety of Dada expression while at the same time reflecting the ephemeral nature of Dada's strategies.² For these periodicals

² The most complete published source for bibliographical information on Dada periodicals is an appendix to Arturo Schwarz's *Almanacco Dada* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), pp. 651-725. Many of the most important European and American Dada periodicals have been reprinted in facsimile in a series of

were a far cry from the traditional weekly or monthly review of the arts that was a cultural institution of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As with all of Dada's manifestations, they violated every convention of the literary-artistic review. To call some of them "periodicals" may be a misnomer, since they appeared at highly irregular intervals; and indeed, some were never planned to appear more than once. In Germany especially, where censorship was severe, the editors knew that their radical publications would be forbidden after the first issue, so they simply distributed a first number of one "periodical," and when it was banned, published the first number of their next periodical. A Dada journal might change its title with every issue. The different issues of the Dutch review *Mecano* were assigned colors instead of numbers. Some Dada reviews were published in multiple versions to circumvent censorship in the different countries in which they were distributed. In their content, the Dada reviews reflected the widest variety of Dada's activities, not only in literature and the visual arts, but also in music, philosophy, politics, architecture—even in advertising. Some of the Dadaists' wildest typographical experiments took place in the pages of these journals. On the other hand, sometimes there was no written text at all—one number of Kurt Schwitters's review *Merz* was a suite of lithographs by Hans Arp; another number was a phonograph recording.

The International Dada Archive at The University of Iowa Libraries has assembled what is certainly the world's most complete collection of Dada periodicals, both in original copies and reproduced in a variety of formats.³ The Special Collections Department houses a precious collection of the original publications—a collection made all the more valuable by the library's unique commitment to preserve these masterpieces of book art

portfolios edited by Schwarz under the general title *Documenti e periodici Dada* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970).

³ For a general overview of the activities and resources of the archive see Timothy Shipe, "The Dada Archive," *Books at Iowa*, no. 39 (November 1983), pp. 3-16.

in their original form. The remainder of this article will introduce the reader to a few of these treasures.

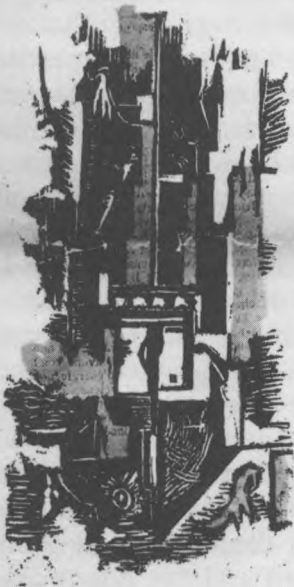
Just as Dada began in Zurich, so may Dada periodicals be said to begin in the same city with the review *Dada*, edited by the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara.⁴ The first four numbers of this review, including the double number 4/5 entitled "Anthologie Dada," appeared in Zurich between 1917 and 1919, after which Tzara transplanted both the magazine and his branch of the movement to Paris. The Special Collections Department holds original copies of the second and third Zurich numbers, and it is these two numbers that show most dramatically the transformation in Tzara's conception of the review. Number 2, while it contains some strikingly modernist poetry and graphics, remains well within the conventions of the progressive literary-artistic journals of the time. It is the last number to bear the typical subtitle "Recueil littéraire et artistique." The issue clearly demonstrates Dada's heavy indebtedness, at this early stage of its development, to the avant-garde movements which had swept Europe during the previous decade: Expressionism, Cubism, and above all, Italian Futurism. Close to half the textual content is in Italian, and such Futurist poets and visual artists as Prampolini, Cantarelli, and D'Arezzo are among the contributors. Text and graphics are maintained on separate pages, and the typography, except for a mildly innovative poem by Pierre Albert-Birot, remains well within conventional boundaries.

Dada 3, on the other hand, casts off these conventions—there is no mistaking it for an ordinary literary magazine. It is more than just a container for innovative literary and artistic works; it is itself a striking work of avant-garde art (or antiart). Textual and visual materials are now scattered across almost every page, sometimes violating each other's boundaries. A dazzling array of typefaces is used, and texts are oriented in various directions on the pages—lines of type even run diagonally. In

⁴ Much useful historical and critical material is contained in two facsimile reprints of *Dada*: (1) *Dada Zurich Paris 1916-1922*, ed. Michel Giroud (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1981) (a reprint of *Dada* and three other periodicals); (2) *Dada: Réimpression critique*. Tome II. Dossier critique, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Dominique Baudouin (Nice: Centre du xx^e siècle, 1983).

DADA 3

Directeur:
TRISTAN TZARA



Bois de M. Janco.

Je ne veux même pas savoir s'il y a eu des hommes avant moi. (Dada)

Administration
Mouvement DADA
Zurich
Zeltweg 83

Fr. 1.50

An illustration by Tzara's friend and fellow Romanian Marcel Janco, one of the early participants in Zurich Dada, on the cover of *Dada*, no. 3 (December 1918).

places it is almost impossible to tell where one text ends and another begins, or whether a piece should be considered a drawing or a literary text. Advertisements for recent publications of the Zurich Dadaists are placed among the other pieces as an integral part of the assemblage. Almost all of the works in *Dada 3*, beginning with Tzara's own "Manifeste Dada 1918," are by the Dadaists themselves, or by young French writers who would soon join the movement when it arrived in Paris; only a few items stem from the Futurists.

Perhaps most interesting, and most revealing of Dada's strategies, is the fact that the issue exists in two different versions, designed to fully represent the internationalist flavor of the movement while avoiding the strict censorship that still prevailed in France in December 1918. Young German artists and writers had been among the key participants in Dada from the beginning, and Tzara wanted to include their works in his review; but the fervent nationalism that held sway in France, a country that had been at war with Germany only a month earlier, made it certain that any publication containing German contributions would be denied entry by the authorities. In order to keep his review truly international, while at the same time making it available in Paris—in 1918 still the world center for the artistic avant-garde—Tzara used a subterfuge that continued to create bibliographic confusion until 1975. He included works by Germans on two pages: poems by Ferdinand Hardekopf and Jakob von Hoddis, an essay by Richard Huelsenbeck on the visual works of the Alsatian poet and painter Hans (or Jean) Arp, and two illustrations by Hans Richter, entitled "Gesicht 1 u. 2" ("Face 1 and 2"). But anyone perusing Iowa's copy of *Dada 3* will search in vain for the written contributions. Richter's illustrations are there, with the French title "Bois." The remainder of the two pages consists of writings by the French poets Philippe Soupault and Pierre Albert-Birot, the Italian Futurist Camillo Sbarbaro, and by Tzara himself. Tzara had secretly printed the issue in two versions: an international version including German writings, and a version for French consumption, in which the German works were replaced by pieces in French and Italian. Tzara's stratagem succeeded in that it permitted *Dada 3* to be read in

Paris, where it was noted with intense interest by members of the literary avant-garde. Thus, the trick of the dual versions paved the way for the enthusiastic reception that the young Romanian was to receive in the French capital a year later.⁵

When Tzara left Zurich for Paris in January 1920, his arrival was eagerly awaited by a group of young French poets including Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Philippe Soupault.⁶ Since the previous year, these three had edited a small literary magazine with the matter-of-fact title *Littérature*.⁷ Although their intention from the outset had been to produce an innovative avant-garde publication that would set itself apart from the many other literary reviews in the capital, *Littérature* in fact remained, during the first year of its existence, rather safely within the conventions of such magazines. Thus, the first number included works by many of France's best-established writers, among them André Gide, Paul Valéry, and Pierre Reverdy. And there was certainly no trace of innovation in the magazine's format: a plain yellow cover bearing the title and the usual publication data. Meanwhile, though, Dada had taken Paris by storm, and the young editors of *Littérature* were among the most active participants in the movement, which Tzara had transplanted from Switzerland. By 1920, *Littérature* was clearly being transformed into a Dada publication. The conservative yellow cover remained, but the contents came more and more to belie the packaging, and the title seemed to become more an ironic joke than a description of the journal's contents. (Indeed, at one point the editors resolved to publish no more literary texts in their magazine—a resolution they were unable to maintain.) Number 13 (May 1920) was entirely devoted to the manifestos read at three Dada lecture-

⁵ It was Lionel A. Biron who resolved the confusion surrounding the dual versions, in "The Secret French and German Editions of Tristan Tzara's *Dada* 3," *Rackham Literary Studies*, no. 6 (1975), pp. 35-40. The variant pages are reprinted in Biron's article, as well as in the two facsimile editions mentioned above.

⁶ The most extensive historical treatment of Dada in Paris is Michel Sanouillet's *Dada à Paris* (Paris: J. J. Pauvert, 1965).

⁷ For the history of *Littérature*, see Sanouillet, pp. 101-10, 119-22, 306-7, and 349-58, as well as the introductory essays to the two-volume reprint of the magazine (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1978).

performances in February of that year. Other numbers published in 1920 and 1921 combined contributions by established literary figures with items that displayed the strategies characteristic of Dada. The device of the circulating inquiry, common to many European periodicals, was turned on its head as writers representing the literary establishment as well as the avant-garde were asked to respond to increasingly absurd questions, from the conventional "Why do you write?" (no. 9) to "Are there still people who enjoy life?" (no. 17) and culminating in the quasi-scientific survey in which 11 writers affiliated with Dada were asked to rate without comment some 200 individuals and institutions (mostly literary and artistic figures, but also including such diverse individuals as Mohammed, Edison, and the unknown soldier) on a scale of -25 to 20 ("-25 expressing the strongest aversion, 0 indicating absolute indifference"). The results of this survey were presented in tabular form in no. 18 (March 1921). Number 20 (August 1921), the last issue of the first series of *Littérature*, consisted of documents from the "trial" held by the Dada movement in judgment of Maurice Barrès in May of that year. The Dadaists felt that Barrès, a writer who had been an intellectual hero for many of them, had betrayed their ideals by adopting a fervently nationalistic stance during the war years. The mock trial, which Barrès, needless to say, did not attend, led to a major split among the Paris Dadaists. One faction, centered on the editors of *Littérature*, considered the trial a serious political and intellectual action; the other, headed by Tzara, approached the event with the absurdist humor typical of previous Dada performances. Naturally, the conduct of the two factions at the tribunal differed accordingly, and the resulting rift was never fully healed.

Number 21 of *Littérature*, which completed the compilation of documents from the Barrès trial, was never published, although the page proofs have been preserved.⁸ There followed a gap of more than half a year, and when the new series of *Littérature* appeared, it was a radically different publication. In format, the new version was more distinctively Dada. The plain

⁸ These proofs are reproduced in facsimile in Sanouillet, pp. 577-91.



This ironic portrait of some of the Paris Dadaists by Francis Picabia appeared on the cover of *Littérature* n.s. no. 8 (January 1923).

yellow covers were replaced by whimsical, sometimes humorously erotic cover drawings by Man Ray and Francis Picabia, with typography that often incorporated puns on the title. Two of the most prominent contributors to the new series, Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, had been at the center of New York Dada; and their fragmentary, pun-filled writings and their whimsical iconoclastic artwork typified the Dada spirit as much as anything in the old series. But, at the same time, it was clear from the very first number that the editors, and particularly Breton (who soon took exclusive direction of the magazine), had some serious new concerns that were leading them in a new direction. That direction would come to be called Surrealism. Number 1 of the new series (March 1922) includes several revealing items: a report by Breton of three dreams, foreshadowing the intense interest of the Surrealists in the hidden world of dreaming; a note by Tzara (his last contribution to *Littérature*) on Lautréamont, a nineteenth-century writer the Surrealists were to regard as one of their chief precursors; and a rather scanty interview by Breton with Sigmund Freud, anticipating the great importance that the relatively new field of psychoanalysis was to hold for the as yet unnamed movement. *Littérature* survived into 1924, by which time Dada in Paris was dead as a movement, and the early Surrealist experiments in the unconscious and the occult were well under way.

Besides *Littérature* and *Dada* (which Tzara brought with him to Paris), a multitude of other, mostly short-lived, periodicals flourished among the Paris Dadaists. Virtually every participant in the movement produced his own little magazine, many of which appeared for only one or two issues. Two of the most interesting were Paul Eluard's *Proverbe* (1921-22) and Francis Picabia's *Cannibale* (1920).⁹

Proverbe is the Dadaists' most penetrating excursion into the problematics of language. From the movement's earliest days in Zurich, language posed the most serious problems for the Dadaists in their attempt to overthrow all existing forms of thought, since language was the foundation on which thought

⁹For discussions of these and other ephemeral periodical publications of Paris Dada, see Sanouillet, pp. 210-16.

rested. If they accepted the heritage of language, their efforts to tear down the culture that depended on it would be futile. The early sound poetry, strings of meaningless syllables recited by Hugo Ball and others, was in part a response to this problem. In this context, the notion of a literary magazine, composed of words organized to form logical units (sentences), which were further combined into unified poems, stories, and articles, implied an acceptance of the very norms which Dada rejected. The dilemma is neatly summarized in a short piece in *Proverbe*, no. 5, entitled "X, ou le silence méprisant" ("X, or the Scornful Silence").

Madame Rachilde has written an article on Dada. She proves that one must not write articles on Dada.

M. Georges Courteline spoke on Dada for an hour He said that one must not speak about Dada

If one must speak about Dada, one must speak about Dada.

If one must not speak about Dada, one must still speak about Dada.

The Dadaists' rejection of the conventions of language is most explicit in the slogan that heads *Proverbe*, no. 3: "Bas les mots" ("Down with words").

Proverbe does contain a few poems and articles, but mostly it is composed of sentences—sentences isolated from any larger context except that of a general questioning of the concept of language. Some could be construed as aphorisms that poke fun at the notion of aphoristic thinking; some deal explicitly with the problem of words and their meaning; most are virtually untranslatable. A few items are presented as poems on traditional literary subjects, but in fact highlight the question of how a poem, or indeed any discourse, can be "about" anything. Here are two examples from *Proverbe*, no. 5, requiring no knowledge of French beyond the words "berceuse," "fille," and "mère" (lullabye, daughter, and mother).

Persiennes

Persienne?

Persienne Persienne Persienne

Persienne persienne persienne persienne persienne
persienne persienne persienne persienne persienne
persienne persienne persienne persienne persienne

Persienne persienne persienne persienne

Persienne?

Berceuse

Fille et mère et mère et fille
et fille et mère et mère et fille
et fille et mère et mère et fille
et fille et mère et mère et mère
et fille et fille et fille et mère

The major names in French Dada are all represented in *Proverbe*: Aragon, Picabia, Tzara, Soupault, Breton, Eluard himself, and others. But in no. 3, Eluard began inserting some fragments without the prior knowledge of their authors, and he gave some of the aphorisms fictive attributions. Finally, in no. 5, all of the contributions were unsigned; Eluard had achieved a supreme contradiction: a literary magazine without authors.

The two numbers of Picabia's *Cannibale*, while closer than *Proverbe* to the expected format of a literary review, are virtual compendia of Dada techniques. There are parodies of literary news and gossip: "It has been asked, who is the mysterious personnage behind Dada? We wish to announce that it is Germaine Dada who is supporting the movement from her secret funds." There are the usual manifestos by Tzara and Picabia. The techniques of chance, collage, and found objects are also in evidence. A contribution by Tzara, entitled "Douleur en cage Dada à la nage" ("Pain in a cage, Dada swimming"), consists of a photograph of a ticket stub, and one of Breton's signed pieces is a list of "Bretons," with addresses and phone

numbers, lifted from the Paris telephone directory.¹⁰

The other major postwar center of European Dada was Berlin. Here, the young radicals who became involved with the movement faced far more severe obstacles of repression and censorship than did the members of the Parisian avant-garde. In Berlin, *Neue Jugend*, a small Expressionist periodical founded by students in 1914 a few months before the beginning of the war, played a role similar to that played by *Littérature* in the development of Dada in Paris.¹¹ The German Expressionists were sharply divided over the issue of the World War, and the young editors of *Neue Jugend* were no exception. A few were strongly opposed to the war; the majority were enthusiastically in favor of it; in any case, before long almost all of them were at the front. Thus, the magazine ceased publication in December of the same year.

Enter Wieland Herzfelde, a budding young writer who had spent a few months at the Belgian front in the medical corps, was expelled for insubordination, and returned to Germany a committed pacifist. Establishing his residence in Berlin, Herzfelde soon became involved with a circle of intellectuals who were opposed to the war. This circle included Herzfelde's brother Helmut (better known as the photomontage artist John Heartfield), the painter and caricaturist George Grosz, and the Expressionist writer Franz Jung. Finding an organ to air their views seemed a hopeless task, considering the heavy censorship and strict licensing requirements for new periodicals. In 1916 Herzfelde found an ingenious solution to this problem: he received permission from Heinz Barger, the main editor of *Neue Jugend*, to resume publication of the dormant magazine, with Barger continuing as chief editor in name only. Since *Neue Jugend* had, in its last issue, shown strong support for the war effort, the censors would be likely to pay little attention at first to the revived publication. By this stratagem, the group of pacifists succeeded for nearly a year in publishing an antiwar

¹⁰ Examples from *Cannibale*, no. 2 (May 1920).

¹¹ The development of Berlin Dada in relation to the *Neue Jugend* group is described by Roy F. Allen in *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle, 1974), pp. 470-76 and 505-34.

journal in the German capital at the height of the World War. Granted, the group's pacifist views had to be expressed discretely, and mostly by means of subtle implication; still, the new direction of *Neue Jugend* quickly became evident to Barger, who remained staunchly prowar. He began an attempt to reassert control over the magazine, and one product of his struggle with the Herzfelde circle was the *Almanach der Neuen Jugend*, dated 1917 but actually published in late 1916. Herzfelde had compiled the *Almanach* as an anthology of works by his usual contributors; its pacifist tone was to be much more open than in the regular numbers of the journal. But Herzfelde was recalled to the war front in October, and Barger took this opportunity to make substantial changes in the *Almanach*, watering down its political content. Nevertheless, the antiwar leanings of the contributors were sufficiently apparent to the German authorities, and they banned the publication before it ever went on sale.

After this, Herzfelde's associates began a complex series of maneuvers designed both to prevent Barger from regaining control of *Neue Jugend* and to continue publication in the face of increasing legal obstacles. These maneuvers succeeded in prolonging the journal's life through just one more regular number and two quasi-legal issues in newspaper format, the last appearing in June 1917. But this final stage of *Neue Jugend* had two significant by-products. One was the creation of a new publishing house, the Malik-Verlag, which was to play a vital role in the artistic and intellectual life of the political left in Weimar Germany. The second by-product was the solidification of a literary-artistic group which, a year later, would form the core of Berlin Dada.

Among the contributors to the later issues of *Neue Jugend* was Richard Huelsenbeck, a German writer who had been actively involved in Zurich Dada. Returning to Berlin in early 1917, Huelsenbeck became closely associated with Herzfelde, Grosz, and others connected with the magazine. Since late 1916 this group had been involved in a series of public literary evenings whose tone of revulsion against the horrors of the Great War had provoked a responsive chord among those who attended. At one such meeting, in February 1918, Huelsenbeck gave

some introductory remarks in which, without forewarning the other participants, he in effect co-opted the evening in the name of Dada. Huelsenbeck's surprise remarks caused a considerable stir among those in attendance as well as among newspaper reviewers. Soon Dada was attracting a great deal of attention among artists and intellectuals in the German capital, and by April, Huelsenbeck and members of the *Neue Jugend* group had formed a "Club Dada" whose activities reached a peak during the chaotic period of the German military defeat and the subsequent coups and revolutions that ushered in the Weimar era. Since the strong communistic leanings of many of these artists and writers assured that their publications would face serious opposition from the authorities, the Berlin Dadaists, following the lead of *Neue Jugend's* editors, used a wide variety of legal and illegal strategies to produce a series of wildly innovative periodicals, mostly published by the Malik-Verlag, with titles like *Die Pleite* ("Bankruptcy") and *Jedermann sein eigener Fussball* ("Every man his own football").

One hundred fifty miles from Berlin, in the semiprovincial city of Hanover, a writer and artist named Kurt Schwitters developed his own, quieter version of Dada. Blackballed, in effect, by the majority of Berlin Dadaists, Schwitters created *Merz*, whose name he took from an isolated syllable in the name of a local bank. Like *Dada*, *Merz* was a word with limitless applications. It was a noun, a verb, and an adjective; it was a person, a place, and a one-man artistic movement. It was also the title of a magazine which Schwitters edited from 1923 to 1932. More than any other Dada periodical, *Merz* stretched the definition of a literary magazine to its limits, anticipating *Aspen* and other mixed-media magazines of the sixties. One issue of *Merz* was a suite of lithographs by Arp; another was a phonograph record of Schwitters reading part of his monumental sound poem, the "Ur-Sonate." *Merz* was more consistently innovative in its treatment of typography than any but the most short-lived of the Dada magazines. Several numbers consisted of collaborative, typographical "fairy tales"; another was devoted to typographical innovation in advertising, an area in which Dada's influence is still strong. Schwitters maintained close contacts with all the major postwar European Dada

Inhalt: DADA IN HOLLAND. KOK: GEDICHT. BONSET: GEDICHT; AAN ANNA BLOEME.
PICABIA: ZEICHNUNG. HANNAH HÖCH: ZEICHNUNG; WEISSLACKIERTE TÛTE

MERZ

1



HOLLAND



DADA



JANUAR 1923
HERAUSGEBER: KURT SCHWITTERS
HANNOVER · WALDHAUSENSTRASSE 5"

The cover of the first number of Kurt Schwitters's periodical, *Merz* (January 1923), an issue devoted to Dada in The Netherlands.

centers: Berlin through Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, Cologne through Arp, Paris through Tzara, The Netherlands through Theo van Doesburg. All of these individuals were important contributors to *Merz*.

The role of Dada within New York's avant-garde is far too complex a story to relate here.¹² The set of trends that is usually referred to as "New York Dada" began as early as 1913, when the notorious Armory Show introduced the European artistic avant-garde to a fascinated if skeptical American public. The centerpiece of that exhibition, at least as far as public response was concerned, was Marcel Duchamp's painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase no. 2*, which was praised or (mostly) attacked in newspapers across the country and which came to epitomize modern art for its supporters as well as for its detractors. Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and several other European artists for whom New York, like Zurich, served as a haven during the World War, formed, along with a few Americans like Man Ray and Beatrice Wood, the core of an artistic avant-garde that had two main patrons: Walter Conrad Arensberg, an art collector and member of a wealthy industrialist family, and Alfred Stieglitz, the German-American photographer whose periodical *Camera Work* championed not only the then still-daring notion of photography as an art form, but also the cause of modern art in general. Although it was not until 1921 that Duchamp, Ray, and their associates applied the term "Dada" to describe their activities, they had in fact been busily shocking New Yorkers with works and gestures that were Dada in essence even before that term was coined in Switzerland.

This "Dada spirit" is typified by a short-lived little magazine called *Blindman*,¹³ published in 1917 by Duchamp, Wood, and Henri-Pierre Roché. The first of the two numbers was issued in celebration of the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, to whose organizing committee Duchamp belonged

¹² For the history of New York Dada in relation to other avant-garde trends in America, see Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1975). The most important recent publication on the subject is *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986).

¹³ For the history of *Blindman*, see Tashjian, pp. 52-56.

and whose purpose was to provide a forum through which modern artists could display their work in complete freedom from the restrictive structure of the usual juried exhibitions. Any artist would be permitted to display his or her work, without any form of censorship. Duchamp and his associates saw this exhibition as an opportunity for all forms of modern art in America, rivaling that provided by the Armory Show a few years earlier; and they used the first number of *Blindman* to publicize the event. But, as the second number (called *Blind Man*) reveals, their enthusiasm was soon shattered by one of the most controversial incidents in the history of American art.¹⁴

Since 1914, Duchamp had produced a series of "art objects" that called into question the very nature of an artwork. These objects he came to call "readymades." They were everyday objects, selected from the whole array of items available in the age of mass production, singled out by the French artist, with or without modifications, often given ironic or punning titles, and designated "artworks." Duchamp raised a bottle rack, a bicycle wheel, and a snow shovel, among other objects, to the status of artworks. Volumes have been written on the significance of Duchamp's readymades. The relationship of this concept to the concerns and strategies of the Dadaists is evident: in the desire to attack the public's notion of what constitutes "art"; in the violation of the boundaries separating different artistic media (the titles of the readymades often being incorporated as texts written on the objects themselves); in the intense but ironic artistic interest in the products of modern technology. The most outrageous object selected by Duchamp was a urinal, which he inverted, gave the title *Fountain*, signed "R. Mutt," and submitted to the Independents' exhibition, whose organizing committee hardly suspected that "R. Mutt" was among their members. The piece, needless to say, was vehemently rejected, and Duchamp resigned from the committee in indignation. The second and last issue of *Blind Man*,

¹⁴ The "Richard Mutt" incident is described, among other places, in Tashjian, pp. 54-56, and in Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Marcel Duchamp, Eros c'est la vie* (Troy, New York: Whitston, 1981), pp. 162-64.

largely devoted to response to the "Richard Mutt case," is one of the most significant documents of twentieth-century art in the United States. At the center of the magazine is a photograph of the now famous urinal, taken by none other than Alfred Stieglitz. Only a few years earlier, Stieglitz had faced an uphill battle in winning for photography the status of an art form, and now he was taking a mundane plumbing fixture as a subject. Truly, the Dadaists accomplished a permanent "reevaluation of values" rivaled only by the procurement techniques of the Pentagon: today an authorized reproduction of Duchamp's urinal will sell for well over \$35,000! Still more significant, though, are the questions that Duchamp and the other Dadaists force us to ask about the nature of art: What is the distinction in aesthetic value between an "original" and a "reproduction" and is this distinction still meaningful in an age of mechanical reproduction? What is the relation between the monetary value and the aesthetic value of an artwork? In the machine age, does the individual artist's craftsmanship have any bearing on either kind of value? Does the essence of an artwork lie in its conception or in its realization? What is the nature of the creative act?

In 1919, the review *Der Dada* gave the ironic advice, "Invest your money in Dada." Doubly ironic is the fact that anyone who had heeded this advice would be rich today. The most ephemeral publications of the Dadaists now fetch enormous prices at auction houses and antiquarian shops. And with good reason: ephemerality was at the heart of the Dadaists' art. The many small periodicals that they produced are precious not only as documents of an influential artistic movement, but also as works of art in their own right. The innovative format of these Dada periodicals changed forever the way we look at the printed page. Unfortunately, because these priceless works were published during and immediately after World War I, the highly acidic paper on which they were printed is among the worst ever produced. They are crumbling at an alarming rate, and without timely action they will be lost forever. It is therefore fortunate that such a substantial collection of Dada periodicals is housed in The University of Iowa Libraries. Not only is the library's book conservation program, headed by

William Anthony, at the very forefront of preservation techniques nationwide; the Dada collection is one of that program's two top preservation priorities. Because of this unique commitment to preserving the documents of the Dada movement, in 50 years The University of Iowa Libraries may not only have the world's most comprehensive Dada collection—they may well have the world's *only* Dada collection.

Bibliography of Original Dada Periodicals in the University Libraries

The following list is limited to original Dada periodicals housed in the Special Collections Department. Also included are a few periodicals which are closely associated with individual Dadaists (e.g., Ball's *Almanach der Freien Zeitung*) or which played a significant role in the development of Dada in particular cities (e.g., Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work*). Specifically excluded is the library's substantial collection of Surrealist periodicals, published after 1923, in which the chief collaborators were former Dadaists. Special Collections' holdings are bracketed at the end of each entry.

In addition to these titles, the International Dada Archive has a virtually complete collection of Dada periodicals in reprint and on microfilm, totaling more than 150 titles.

- Action: Cahiers individualistes de philosophie et d'art*. Ed. Florent Fels, et al. Paris, 1920-21. 10 numbers. [Complete.]
- Almanach der Freien Zeitung*. Ed. Hugo Ball. Bern, 1917-18. 1 vol. [Complete.]
- Almanach der Neuen Jugend*. Ed. Heinz Barger. Berlin, 1917. 1 vol. [Complete.]
- Der Ararat*. Ed. Hans Goltz. Munich, 1918-21. [Series 1] (1918-19): 3 numbers; [series 2] (1920-21): 2 vol. (21 numbers). [[Series 1] no. 1; [series 2] complete.]
- Blindman*. Ed. Henri-Pierre Roché, Beatrice Wood, and Marcel Duchamp. New York, 1917. 2 numbers. (No. 2 called *Blind Man*.)
- Camera Work*. Ed. Alfred Stieglitz. New York, 1903-17. 50 numbers. [Complete.]
- Cannibale*. Ed. Francis Picabia. Paris, 1920. 2 numbers. [No. 2.]
- Dada*. Ed. Tristan Tzara. Zurich, Paris, 1917-21. 7 numbers. [Nos. 2-3; no. 7 (called *Dadaphone*).]
- L'Elan*. Ed. Amédée Ozenfant. Paris, 1915-16. 10 numbers. [Complete.]
- L'Esprit nouveau*. Ed. Paul Dermée. Paris, 1920-25. 28 numbers. [Complete.]
- Les Feuilles libres*. Ed. Marcel Raval. Paris, 1919-28. 49 numbers. [Complete.]
- Die Freude: Blätter einer neuen Gesinnung*. Burg Lauenstein, 1920. 1 vol. [Complete.]
- L'Instant*. Ed. Pierre André-May. Paris, 1922-24. 30 numbers. [Nos. 1, 3-5, 10, 12-16, 19-21, 25-26.]
- Littérature*. Ed. Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Philippe Soupault. Paris, 1919-24. 20 numbers; new series, 13 numbers. [Nos. 1-19; n.s. nos. 1-2, 5-6, 8-9.]

- Der Marstall*. Ed. Paul Steegemann. Hanover, 1920. 1 double number. [Complete.] Merz. Ed. Kurt Schwitters. Hanover, 1923-32. 21 numbers (numbered 1-24; nos. 10, 22-23 never published). [Nos. 1-2, 4, 6, 8-9, 21.]
- Le Mot*. Ed. Jacques Reynaud. Paris, 1914-15. 20 numbers. [Complete.]
- Neue Blätter*. Ed. Carl Einstein. Berlin, 1911-13. 3 series (12, 3, 5 numbers). [Series 1-2 (complete); series 3, nos. 3, 5.]
- Die neue Kunst*. Ed. Heinrich F. S. Bachmair, Josef Amberger, Johannes R. Becher, and Karl Otten. Munich, 1913-14. 3 numbers. [Complete.]
- Das neue Pathos*. Ed. Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele, Robert R. Schmidt, Ludwig Meidner, and Paul Zech. Berlin, 1913-20. 3 numbers (no. 3, called 1914 volume, actually published in 1920). [No. 3.]
- Noi*. Ed. Enrico Prampolini and Bino Sanminiatielli. Rome, 1917-25. 2 series (4, 2 vol.). [2 unidentified numbers, ca. 1923-25.]
- Philosophies*. Ed. Pierre Morhange. Paris, 1924-25. 6 numbers. [Complete.]
- Poesia*. Ed. Mario Dessy. Milan, 1905-09, 1920-[21?]. Series 1: 5 vol.; series 2: [10?] numbers. [Series 1: vol. 1, no. 8; vol. 2-3; vol. 4, nos. 2-5, 8, 10; vol. 5.]
- Proverbe*. Ed. Paul Eluard. Paris, 1920-21. 6 numbers. [Nos. 3, 6.]
- Der Querschnitt*. Ed. Hans von Wedderkop. Berlin, 1921-36. 16 vol. [Vol. 1-5; vol. 6, nos. 7-12; vol. 7-16.]
- Selection: Chronique de la vie artistique et littéraire*. Ed. André de Ridder and Paul-Gustave Van Hecke. Antwerp, 1920-33. Series 1: 6 vol.; series 2: 14 numbers. [Complete.]
- Sic*. Ed. Pierre Albert-Birot. Paris, 1916-19. 54 numbers. [Complete.]
- De Stijl*. Ed. Theo van Doesburg. Leiden, Schveningen, The Hague, 1922-32. 90 numbers. [Vols. 1-3 (= nos. [1-36]); vol. 6 (= nos. [61-72]); dernier numéro (= no. [90]).]
- Sturm-Bühne*. Ed. Herwarth Walden. Berlin, 1918-19. 8 numbers. [Complete.]
- Das Tribunal: Hessische radikale Blätter*. Ed. Carlo Mierendorff. 2 vol. [Vol. 1, nos. 2-4, 7-11.]
- Die weissen Blätter*. Ed. René Schickele, Paul Cassirer. Berlin, 1913-21. 7 vol.; new series: 1 number. [Vol. 1-6; vol. 7, nos. 1-10, 12.]