

Briefly what I think about Marcel Duchamp, and how it all went.

In 2011 I read for the first time a book about Marcel Duchamp.

I was 55 then and a visual artist since 1980.

The book started with the description of "Étant donné: 1) la chute d'eau, 2) le gaz de l'éclairage".

This post-humorous work of Duchamp was not known to me then.

But I just wondered "Why post-humorous?" and started to think and look differently at his works.

The two given keys opened the enigmas hidden in Duchamp's work.

It was all straight erotically, a very specific kind of erotica and just unbelievable!

Reading that book, I found no confirmation of what I discovered.

I did more visual analyses with the two keys and learned that every Duchamp work is a hiding game.

They are all different visual problems but the solution is always: 1) waterfall, 2) lighting gas.

Referring to the water and the gas coming out of a woman's bottom.

That was the hard thing: you need a dirty mind to play these games.

But it was astonishing to see how clever and witty all these problems were created.

So I played his games continuing my visual research.

Again I was asking "Why did he do this?"

Nobody had ever written about it.

I found something about a possible relationship with his sister Suzanne and examined that.

Suzanne was two years younger than Marcel and they had their childhood together.

Later Suzanne became a painter also and she was hiding the very same obscenities.

Things settled in my imagination.

It was beautiful to see how their artworks seemed to be secret conversations.

All Marcel's work is referring to their love, to what they did sexually and their marriage.

Then I noticed that their brother Jacques Villon was doing the same hiding game too.

I did not understand this family affair and I didn't want to know it neither.

Soon I saw that all Marcel Duchamp's friends were making the same riddle paintings.

And many other cubist artists.

This was too much, impossible!

No book, no site was telling about this.

I thought I was going nuts, so I stopped further visual enquiries.

But I liked this Marcel-Suzanne case...

And I liked my research in addition.

I liked doing the visual puzzles, the illusion games and the word games.

Knowing French is necessary when you study Duchamp.

Never translate Marcel Duchamp!

The chronology of the works is also very essential.

It is so logical also, I liked that.

It was really nice.

But dirty, yes.

Maybe not all I found was the truth, but I was very confident about this track.

For now, I wrote my conclusions down focused on the love between Marcel and Suzanne Duchamp.

I tried ways to present it publicly through an exhibition or a publication.

Nothing worked.

In 2012 I decided to give everything to the world freely, in a website:

1-2-3 DUCHAMP! A visual analysis of the work and the life of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968).

All my drawings, scribbles and writings were in it, making a logical 'Possible Scenario'.

I thought to be helpful, I had no intention to insult Duchamp or whom so ever.

This website was over the top for some, but I knew the top was much, much higher.

*I only hoped that 1 real Duchamp-professor, knowing more, would react.
There were still so many questions and a proper research was needed.
No serious reaction came.
So during 2013 and 2014 I read a lot about the Duchamp context, looking for answers myself.
All the theoretical books about Duchamp are telling me nothing about Duchamp's intelligence.
Duchamp's intelligence is the accumulation of the intelligences of many recent scholars, sorry.
I was very glad to read the Pierre Cabanne conversation with Duchamp.
I must say I had not much sympathy for Marcel Duchamp.
You feel constantly his superiority, how he likes to play and to win.
He seems still a bit angry about the 1912 incident...
And still a little jealous on Picasso's success.
He is always pointing at the right sense of the words he is using.
He is extremely precise in everything and has a surprising good memory.
He was 79 then, a friendly relaxed old man.
I think Marcel must have been a real pain when he was young...
But, many of my findings were confirmed, straight from Duchamp's mouth.
That was really great!
Then I read Duchamp's own writings: puzzles again!
But thanks to the 2 keys I understood most of it. Which was good also.
I solved many new problems and word games too.
I read his correspondence (only his outgoing letters, not one incoming): still very interesting!
Duchamp is a real chameleon and even a good businessman.
Afterwards I ran through many books about the arts in the first half of 1900.
This was a huge shock: the hiding-thing was done by practically any artist indeed!
Unbelievable!
Was my mind definitely infected by a Duchamp-virus?
Or was it really everywhere? (I was panicking!)
No, it was not there in Futurism, neither in German expressionism.
I just became so trained that I saw this water-and-gas trick immediately.
Then I remembered a strange line in one of Duchamp's letters.
I understood that it must have been a sort of running gag, among the artists in Paris.
Positively Cubism, Dada and Surrealism were all into that same hiding game.
Cubist took geometrics to hide in, Dadaists anarchism and Surrealists hid in unconsciousness.
I asked "Why?" once more.
The answers came after reading the few writers and poets Marcel Duchamp liked.
I investigated on them, also using the two keys Duchamp had offered.
With a little bit of imagination I understood the whole affair.
Maybe not everything here is true, but it looks very plausible.
Please inquire more.
This is how I think it all went:
The whole thing started much earlier by the 'Fumistes', 'Zutistes', 'Hydropathes' and other groups.
They were the distinguished punks of the Belle Époque.(I never heard of them before.)
The end of 1800's is marked, in France, by this law on the freedom of gathering and publication.
Many very bourgeois men found the taste of absurdities and provocation.
In Paris, the great era of cabarets, caricatures and satire was born, decadence and no taboos.
These high intellectual gentlemen liked jokes on water and wind very much.
Some of these men were sexually attached to it (Freudian theories were around too).
They wrote about their perversion, but in a double meaning.*

The French language is very rich in wordplays and puns, homonyms, homophones, homographs...
These writers imagined really clever ways to sublimate their passions.
Like Jules Laforgue, Duchamp's favourite.
So, early 1900, the 'Ecole de Paris' must have picked this up, rather as a joke.
And the art of ambiguous, suggestive writing had found its equivalent in painting.
Of course, hiding erotica in paintings existed for ages.
But now it became the very fundament of the Cubist creativity, all secretly.
Cubism ("cu" means bottom in French) was hiding officially in very serious theories.
Meanwhile these Paris' painters had great private fun with the Art of Hiding.
Always the same thing: a face, in profile, or a nose, enjoying water-and-wind.
Picasso was one of the greatest in this game.
Yes, I am sorry...
And Miro, Picabia, Brancusi, Man Ray, Dali, Ernst... and many others, even Kandinsky!
Kandinsky wrote solemn theories about the Art of Hiding as well.
But what was he hiding?
Please understand, I do not mean their art as shameful, or repulsive.
Not at all, I have great respect for all these marvellous hiders.
There is also much humour involved here.
Besides, their paintings will always be great paintings.
It does not matter much, after all.
But what Marcel Duchamp did, was really of another, yes... higher, level.
He left behind every artistic technique, every principle and connection.
He concentrated solely on creating his very own puzzles, with different media.
Even for him it was not clear if it was art.
He called it amusement.
He made "things".
"Things" in the 4th dimension.
Time was necessary to see his art.
Not our eyes but our brain had to see; we had to think; we had to pass time on his work.
We had to solve problems as a new concept of enjoying visual "things".
And every little detail mattered.
His art was never "n'importe quoi".
His ready-mades were the same riddles, but they were "ready" without any interference.
He made his puzzles deliberately difficult, because he did not like them to be easy.
Easy like the childish puzzles of his colleagues, making them in big production.
Duchamp was not productive at all and was seldom showing his time-consuming results.
He lived like a wealthy monk, he did not need much, but could afford everything.
Always on his own, running away from social obligations.
All the big theories on his work came only much later, made by others.
He liked that.
Duchamp himself kept silent, as the real chess player does... just making his moves.
He was strong in strategy..., strategy in art.
Always making his moves far ahead.
Sometimes mystifying: he made puzzles with his puzzles on other puzzles.
Sometimes telling the contrary, which is typical chess too.
Everything was planned, there were no coincidences in this work.
He was taking his time...
There might even be revenge in the whole plan.

*I believe Marcel Duchamp wants to win from all the other cubists.
Because they refused him in 1912, for a stupid reason.
They were afraid their secret game would be revealed by 'Nu descendant un escalier'.
The title was too much saying what they were hiding.
So they kicked Duchamp out of their exhibition.
And Duchamp swore his revenge...
He turned his back to all of them and their obvious ways of hiding.
He looked for more complex ways.
And the others saw that he was superior indeed.
But they did not say why.
Everyone involved had to remain silent in any case about the secret running joke, Duchamp included.
But Marcel-the-smart-guy thought "Why should I keep silent after my lifetime?"
And he made 'Etant donné' as a post-humorous work of art.
Revealing after his death The Big Secret in a very easy riddle.
He started quite early on it and of course no colleague knew about it.
Most of his contemporaries passed away before him, so he wouldn't hurt many of them personally.
Picasso, for one, was still there.
Would he be afraid for his art, when he saw 'Etant donné'?
He understood Duchamp's post-humorous move very well.
Neglecting an attack is a very good defence (one of the Duchamp tactics, by the way.)
So nothing happened.
And the game is still on this stupid draw.
While Duchamp was so eager to win and wanted so much to be the greatest of them all.
In the meantime he is called the greatest artist of the 20th century.
But that he did not know then.
Marcel Duchamp wanted to be honoured for the genius he knew he was.
And somewhere in time he will get this honour.
Now, what can be the next move for somebody who wants to win in time?
Well?
He can only cough it all up and explain everything by himself.
And so... therefore I think...
That one day there will be an outing.
Everything is so well prepared, so made ready...
The 'Arensberg-collection' must be part of the plan too.
All his works, among the others... it is all waiting there, neatly together.
The great Art of Hiding... the Art of Visual Illusion and Sublimation... the Art of the 4th Dimension.
I think he really loves to explain his puzzles, one day.
50 years after his death?
100 years?
Or 81?
Or...?*

*"It is all very logical" Marcel Duchamp always said.
His friend Henri-Pierre Roché quoted: "The best work of Marcel Duchamp is the use of his time".*

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