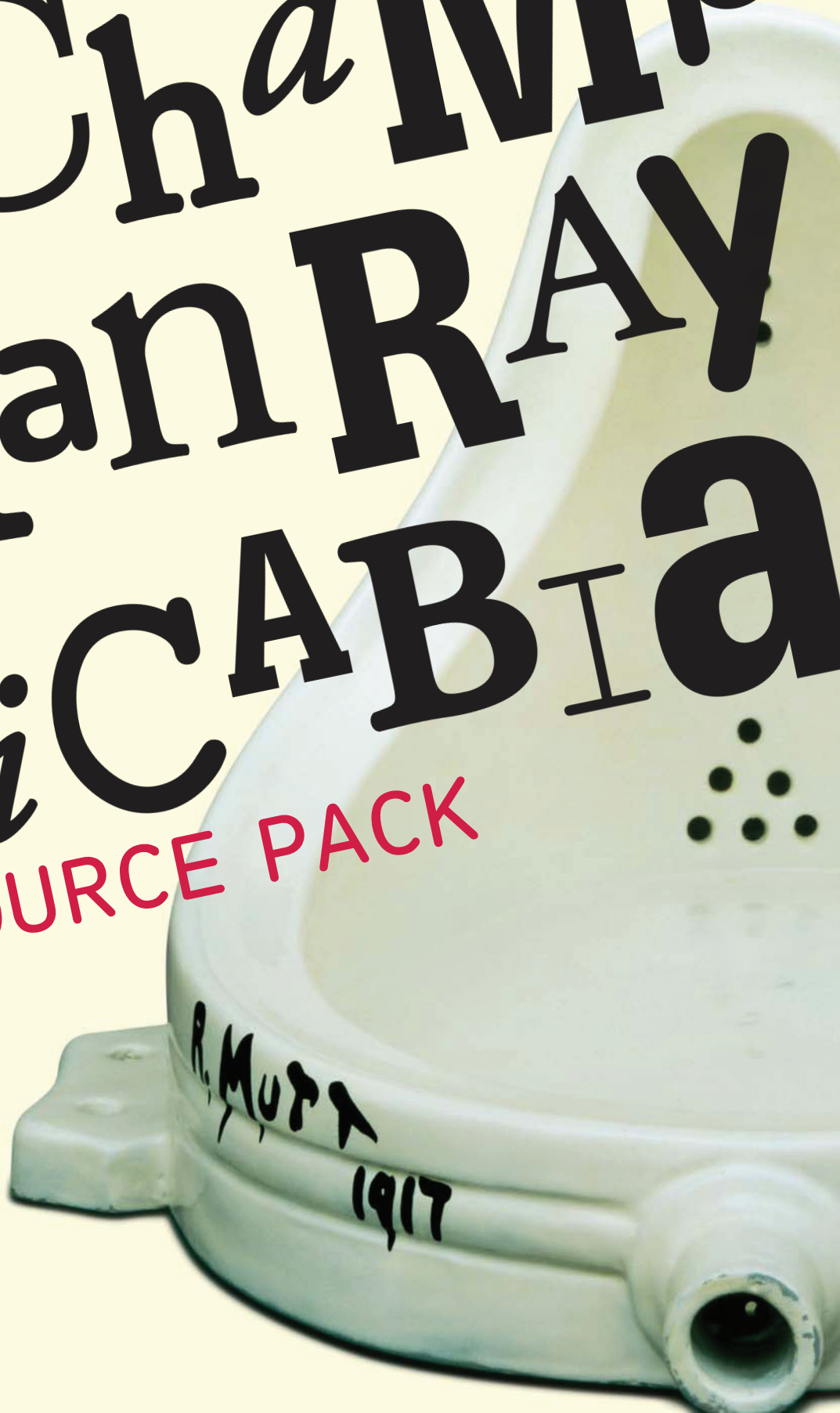


MODERN

TATE

21 FEBRUARY — 26 MAY 2008

DuChamp
ManRAY
PiCABIA
RESOURCE PACK



RESOURCE PACK FOR EDUCATORS AND GROUP LEADERS



This pack can be used to plan a visit to the exhibition and as a stimulus for discussion surrounding the artists work with complementary activities. Our aim is to provide a useful resource beyond the life of the exhibition and to support projects for individual and group use. The pack's activities and discussion points can be adapted to suit the needs of educators and group leaders from a broad range of learning environments, and are suitable for groups who may not be able to visit the exhibition. The images have been carefully selected to give an overall flavour of the works and themes in the exhibition.

Marcel Duchamp *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* January 1912 Philadelphia Museum of Art
© Succession Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2002

Cover Image: Marcel Duchamp *Fountain* 1917 Replica 1964 Tate
© Succession Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP Paris, and DACS, London 2008

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

THEME ONE: COLLABORATION AND FRIENDSHIP

THEME TWO: HUMOUR AND WORDPLAY

THEME THREE: MACHINES

THEME FOUR: OBJECT PORTRAITS

This pack has been produced to accompany the Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia exhibition at Tate Modern, London, 21 February – 26 May 2008. It contains a selection of images which highlight four emerging themes present in the exhibition, along with a selection of related discussion points, activities and links to other contemporary artists and art works. School, young people and community groups are welcome to visit the exhibition. To book tickets at the discounted group rate, call 020 7887 8888.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Key stage 1–2:

Unit 1A *Self-portrait*

Unit 3A *Portraying relationships*

Unit 5A *Objects and meanings*

Unit 6A *People in Action*

Key stage 3:

Unit 7A *Self-image*

Unit 8A *Objects and viewpoints*

Unit 8B *Animating Art*

Cross-curricular links: Science, Citizenship, Graphics, Art and Design, English, Sociology and Psychology

Written by Laurence Van der Nordaa, Michele Fuirer and the Learning team at Tate Modern

You cannot define electricity. The same can be said of art. It is a kind of inner current in a human being, or something which needs no definition.

Marcel Duchamp



INTRODUCTION

This exhibition highlights the work of three of the great figures in twentieth-century art: Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), Man Ray (1890–1976) and Francis Picabia (1879–1953) and underlines the importance of the mutual support and inspiration which they provided each other at different times in their careers. As Jennifer Mundy says of these artists in the exhibition guide, 'For them, art was a tool of the mind, not a matter of skill or taste. They refused to make art to cater for the market or to meet the expectations of the public. They repeatedly changed styles and experimented with new forms. They also expanded the realm of art to include new and surprising themes and materials: movement and time, everyday artefacts.'

These three artists seemed to have very little in common but had a unique affinity based on esteem and trust. At its heart lay the friendships that Duchamp forged with Picabia and with Man Ray at critical points in their careers. This relationship was based on the freedom, openness and multiplicity of the exchanges between them. All three played key roles in Dada and Surrealism.

Duchamp is generally considered the founding father of Pop Art and has been called 'Andy Warhol's indulgent grandfather'. He is renowned for inventing the idea of the 'ready-made' and for presenting 'Fountain' (a urinal made of porcelain signed R.Mutt) one of the mythical emblems of the avant-garde to the Society of Independent Artists in New York in 1916. At the time he was trying to break down the hierarchy of art in order to bring its masterpieces to the level of mundane objects.

An underlying theme in Duchamp's body of work is his interest in science and the machine. He said when visiting the Fair of Air Navigation in Paris in 1912: 'Painting is finished. Who can do better than that propeller?'

*Our heads are round to let
thought change direction.*
Francis Picabia



COLLABORATION AND FRIENDSHIP – DISCUSSION

Duchamp and Picabia met in Paris in 1911, and they instantly became great friends. Duchamp was later to say that Picabia had been a 'teammate'. Both artists went to New York in 1915, where they met Man Ray. Together the three men helped to create a Dada movement in New York, whose irreverent assault on artistic conventions led to a radical rethinking of the nature of art. (Mundy)

- Think of examples of 'team mates' whether a football manager and his team, a politician and her 'spin doctors', a film director and an actor. Pick out the ways in which the team has made a real difference to the way things are in the world. Also think of personal examples in your own life when you have found 'team mates' to help you achieve your goals. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration.

Marcel Duchamp struggled to free his work from the influence of taste, both his own and others. Picabia's life swung between bouts of depression and enthusiasm, his work also swung between Cubist construction and Dadaist destruction. Influenced by anarchist teachings and the latest avant-garde trends in European art, Man Ray was searching for a distinctively individual form of expression. Much of the work of these artists belies classification because of their tendency to avoid convention.

- Discuss whether you think artists need to be free from the rules of society in order to make their work.
- Duchamp approved of Picabia's revolt against convention because he himself mistrusted dogma of any kind. To maintain this stance the artists did not set out to work for profit.
Do you think that artists today work for profit or without expectation of material reward?

*It flashed on me that the genius of
the modern world is machinery.*
Francis Picabia

HUMOUR AND WORD PLAY – ACTIVITIES

There are many examples of anarchic humour within the work of these artists. A lot of the humour derives from a love of wordplay and inventiveness with language. Duchamp created puns from everyday expressions. Picabia's images were complemented by disjointed phrases of no apparent relevance. Picabia also enjoyed making translations of phrases from the dictionary in a literal manner that rendered them nonsensical.

Find examples of wordplay in the exhibition and create some of your own. Use the different language speakers within your group, class or your community to share and explore the interpretation and definition of words. For example, related to a work or works from the exhibition:

- Make shape poems on paper (eg. a poem about a snake written in the shape of the animal).
- Make up short rhymes or improvise words to a rhythm to make a rap.
- Add humorous or satirical captions to collages made up from magazines and newspapers.

Familiarise yourself with these different forms of wordplay, for example: satire, burlesque, puns, metaphors, aphorisms and double meanings.

MACHINES – ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION

In a formative moment in the history of twentieth century art, between 1912 and 1917, Duchamp and Picabia jointly developed a 'machinist aesthetic' wherein they explored technology and machinery in part as a reference to human morphology and thought. It was hard to ignore the impact of machinery in an age of mass industrial production and modern methods of warfare. Although, when Duchamp moved to America in 1915 he was deeply struck by the burgeoning technology, he remained ambivalent about notions of 'progress'.

- Study the drawings of mechanical components by Picabia and Duchamp. Would you consider these to be works of art, or are they designs and graphics? Trace the main lines and the directional signs for forces and movements eg arrows.
- Invent machines which do useless things such as a machine to put marmite on toast or a paper plane maker. Choose the best and split into groups. After making extensive sketches of the machines, try to make some of them with paper and cardboard. The evolution of the artwork is more important than the final piece.
- Discuss together which words describe movement and machines. Let students choose their favourite words and use them to write a small text or poem (it can be funny or very silly).
- Ask students to reduce the text or poem to the minimum amount of words till the essence of the meaning is left. Use that as the title of the artwork.

I have finally freed myself from the sticky medium of paint, and am working directly with light itself.

Man Ray

OBJECT PORTRAITS - ACTIVITY

Man Ray became skilled at controlling the effects of placing an object directly onto light-sensitive paper, which is then briefly exposed to light. There was nothing new in this process since it was essentially a photogram. However, Man Ray was sufficiently proud of his technique that he branded it after his own name, playing on his surname and the idea of a ray of light, calling it a 'Rayograph'.

- Bring together objects which you feel close to and which carry strong memories.
- Make photograms of these objects if you have access to photographic paper and a light source. (Visit Moma's website to view complete instructions on how to make photograms in a darkroom: <http://redstudio.moma.org/interactives/fauxtogram/>).
- If you can't make photograms, trace around the objects to make simple outlines using white crayons on overlapping layers of tracing paper which you could glue onto a black background paper.
- You can also use spray paints to create an outline or halo around an object. (Be careful to abide by health and safety guidelines in relation to the use of spray paints).

COLLECTION/ARTIST LINKS

- Pop Art
- Minimalism
- Conceptual art
- Ceal Floyer *Light Switch* 1992–9
www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=81187
- Michael Craig-Martin *An Oak Tree* 2000
www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=27072
- Online archived event on Duchamp's Legacy
www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/duchamps_legacy
- Schools Online Resources on Duchamp
www.tate.org.uk/learning/schools/marcel Duchamp2390.shtm
- Tate Tracks written by group *Man Like Me* inspired by the work of Duchamp
- Schools Online Resources on Picabia
www.tate.org.uk/learning/schools/francispicabia5640.shtm
- Tate Magazine Online Article: *Man Ray Laid Bare*
www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue3/manraylaidbare.htm