UNVEILING THE CONSORT

PART I

The purpose of Duchamp's later art is the creation of a mythology that looks into the future, outlining a certain trajectory for the fate of modern art.

Marcel Duchamp wrote the above when he was planning his first Ready-mades. Ending his observations with the abbreviation for *quod erat demonstrandum*, a term applied in mathematical and logical assertions meaning *which was to be shown or demonstrated*, he indicates that the Ready-mades are to be a demonstration of various esthetic principles. A brief introductory interpretation of this obscure series of statements should help us to understand Duchamp's metaphors.

Shop windows are the veils between mythic cognition and reality. Or more literally, as in the case of painting, shop windows embody the notion of the picture plane and, as Michel Foucault has pointed out in his analysis of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, what transpires both behind and in front of it. Here the artist's understanding of the external situation, vis-à-vis history and culture, critically affects the construction of pictorial space. Moreover the "goods" within the shop window validate "the existence of the outside world." The artist examines the shop window, or more accurately what lies behind the window, by tentatively making art and searching for a mature and viable style. By doing so, he "pronounces [his] own sentence." The word-sentence has a double meaning here: Duchamp is implying that all works of art adhere to specific semantic and syntactical relations which resemble any one of all possible sentence forms. Hence the artist defines his artistic destiny (that is, sentences himself) by the linguistic choices he makes. An artist's only possible reprieve is to review the shop window and in so doing shift to another sentence structure. One's choice is "round trip" for two reasons: first because any choice, if carried out rigorously and to its farthest limits, will result in the same destination (all sign combinations ultimately become symbols that lose their semiotic capacity); and second because all sentence types form a circular chain of relationships, leading back to the same structure when pursued latitudinally. Ostensibly every artist's entry into art is controlled by the exigencies of past historical change in painting and sculpture. To a large extent, available choices are predetermined. But Duchamp insists that he is not going to allow any personal propensity or psychological quirk to define his choice of objects in the window; he speaks of not "hiding the coition through a glass pane with one or many objects in the shop window." In this case, as we shall later see, *coition* is a synonym for the act of sentence construction. That Eros is the basis of all art and human culture is a fact Duchamp has never tried to hide. So Duchamp's erotic relation to art is that of a man who understands that all forms of coition are permissible under recognized circumstances, and he insists that he is going to experiment with all forms. Only then does he admit that there are certain psychological drawbacks to practicing art logically and not intuitively like every other artist: "The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated. Q.E.D." —Neuilly, 1913

When one undergoes the examination of the shop window, one also pronounces one's own sentence. In fact, one's choice is "round trip." From the demands of the shop windows, from the inevitable response to shop windows my choice is determined. No obstinacy, ad absurdum, of hiding the coition through a glass pane with one or many objects of the shop window. The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated. Q.E.D. 1

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Once aware, by accident and design, of this knowledge, Duchamp had to decide whether or not to publicly divulge it. If versed in drawing up horoscopes, one soon realizes that Duchamp used his information according to the strict dictates of astrological conditions for his birth sign, July 28, 1887, and its conjunctions. Without laboriously presenting an in-depth demonstration of this, several observations may be easily made. According to astrology Duchamp's weaknesses lay in self-centeredness and a tendency to boast of personal achievements. The antidote is modesty, equanimity, and the pursuit of strategies allowing the artist to hide his knowledge while revealing it. Duchamp's strength lay in his ability as a true alchemist, a man who knew the secret of transforming base materials into gold and its cultural equivalents. Therefore it is not surprising that lead is the metal proscribed as the vehicle for Duchamp's successes; the iconography of *The Large Glass* is tediously affixed to...
sheet lead mounted on glass panes. Worldly success is assured for the person following these other dictates—providing his horoscope coincides with Duchamp's.

Presently, though, there is reason enough for breaking the secrecy surrounding Duchamp's work. Not with minimal perversity Duchamp chose the occult sciences as the basis for his iconography, even though after 1912 his art was constructed purely by the application of logic and intellect. Ironically the key to this knowledge is expressed in symbols overwhelmingly rejected by science after the 17th century. Still it is perfectly clear from Pierre Cabanne's *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* that he maintained a steadfastly rationalist approach towards all questions of human culture.

The reader is free to draw his or her conclusions. Yet deductive evidence overwhelmingly points to a single possibility: the so-called occult sciences are based on a conception of social relationships just beginning to be studied by contemporary science. Duchamp was well aware that occult wisdom has little to do with mystical illumination. Rather it is rooted in the language-based cognitive patterns that define human social systems. His supplementary writings are occasionally interlaced with sophisticated allusions to the mythic isomorphisms found in primitive societies. Consequently we are no longer dealing with occult secrets, but with insights that have their origins in linguistic analysis.

Most importantly, the purpose of Duchamp's later art, and particularly *The Large Glass*, is the creation of a mythology that looks into the future, outlining a certain trajectory for the fate of modern art. In his first collection of notes, the *Box of 1914*, he wrote:

*A WORLD IN YELLOW*

The Bridge of Volumes

On top and under the volumes

In order to see pass the small passenger steamer:

In esoteric symbolism yellow is the color of illumination and intellectual penetration. Duchamp creates a panoply of forms that define the social and psychological mechanisms responsible for modern art. Installed within *The Large Glass* these volumes become an intellectual overpass whereby the progression of modernist styles in art is made visible. The word *mouche* in the term *la bateau mouche* also refers to "beauty-patch" or any artifice that would tend to enhance the environment, such as a painting. I contend that the trajectory of *The Large Glass* is historically complete and has been since about 1968. So that in terms of thwarting any possible avant-garde art of the future, there is no danger.

We should proceed by outlining some of the most basic tenets of transcendental magic, or at least those immediately applicable to Duchamp's iconography. In part, the origins of modern chemistry were an attempt to rectify mistaken ideas held by alchemists concerning the properties of physical substances and processes. Some of these false notions are simply overly literal interpretations of the correspondences between metaphysical symbols and their material equivalents. Most essentially alchemy is a philosophy for the perfection of the human soul, a series of prescriptive teachings insuring fundamental understanding of humankind and natural law. The central theory of alchemy revolves around the configuration of the four primal elements: AIR, FIRE, EARTH, and WATER. All entities are thought to be combinations of these elements in varying proportions. These transmutations are based on an "eternal principle" and not on any physical admixture of the four elements. A set of four contingent properties is positioned between the elements: Wet, Hot, Dry, and Cold. Their function is to influence elements adjacent to one another. For instance Heat may change WATER into vapor, thus making it a form of AIR. Or the Wetness of WATER has the power of dissolving EARTH. Also Heat may drive the moisture out of AIR, making it ignite as FIRE.

In the center of this diagram there exists a fifth element referred to variously as ETHER or the UNIVERSAL LIGHT. So that in looking at this configuration from the side it would appear to be a four-sided pyramid. The back of the Great Seal of the United States contains just such a pyramid with an illuminated eye at its apex. This eye represents the discovery that Duchamp made concerning the universal limitations of art. Notice that one only sees the front of the pyramid and a portion of the right side. In all occult science, right is the favored side (this is true also of the iconography of painting and sculpture) while the left is problematic and illusionary, extending into the future and the unknown. Life is represented by heat and dampness—prerequisites of mortal existence—while death is defined by dryness and cold. Here we must return to the preface of *The Large Glass* where Duchamp inscribes:

Given 1. the waterfall

2. the illuminating gas

Two things are Given: that AIR ignites through FIRE providing the illuminating gas and that WATER gradually erodes EARTH by virtue of the waterfall. The illuminating gas and waterfall represent a kind of dichotomy, a balance that must be maintained in human functioning. Please note Duchamp's last major work in the Philadelphia Museum, entitled *Etat Donnés d'eau* 2. *le gaz d'éclairage* (1946-1976) through the door, one's eyes are flung reeling female nude holding a gher right hand, in fact her only visit the left in a wooded background is So in a sense the illuminating gas what is man-made and CULTURAL waterfall represents the NATURAL we might quote Eliphas Levi on the these symbols: "One does not invent one veils a truth, and a shade for is produced analogies... Analogy is the key to Nature and the sole fundamental revelation."*

For the alchemist the triad above the unification of indestructible matter look upon it as joining the front and of the Great Pyramid. Hence Sulphur, principle, unites EARTH and FIRE; Mercurial volatile principle, unites WATER and AIR. Salt is the quintessential state, combining ETHER. Salt is the medium for conjunction and mercury, a union of body and soul, the spirit. Being the male principle, sustoires while mercury receives. In alchemy Sol (sun) and Luna (moon) the androgynous pose of Rose Selanne early 1920s and later adopted the title du sol for his writings. This last invention enables in the artist's name lends credence to possibility that he possessed the Philosopher's Stone and traded it freely to those artists, wisdom to accept it. In the operation of Great Work, the function of Salt is to render the proper circumstances for conjunction between male and female principles. John's his *Prelude to Chemistry* quotes from 16th-century alchemy text on the significance numbers in the Philosopher's Stone: "Of the—that is, the quintessence of its own s...

The four elements, fire, air, water, are shown as proceeding directly from three principles, sulphur, salt, and mercury. Nature; the two 'seeds,' the male and Sol and Luna, or sulphur and mercury—metals; and the one Tincture, from art."

Intention of this essay is to show that the arithmetical symbols represent the semi-principles of language fused to myth.
For the alchemist the triad above represents the unification of indestructible matter. We may look upon it as joining the front and rear faces of the Great Pyramid. Hence Sulphur, the fixed principle, unites Earth and Fire; Mercury, the volatile principle, unites Water and Air; while Salt is the quintessential state, comparable to Ether. Salt is the medium for conjugating sulphur and mercury, a union of body and soul through the spirit. Being the male principle, sulphur bestows while mercury receives. In esoteric alchemy Sol (sun) and Luna (moon) represent King and Queen, gold and silver respectively. Lead may signify the medium through which base metals are transformed into gold and silver. And here note that Marcel Duchamp assumed the androgynous pose of Rosé Sélavy in the early 1920s and later adopted the title Marchand du sel for his writings.7 This last inversion of syllables in the artist's name lends credence to the possibility that he possessed the Philosopher's Salt and traded it freely to those artists with the wisdom to accept it. In the operation of the Great Work, the function of Salt is to provide the proper circumstances for conjunction between male and female principles. John Read in his Prelude to Chemistry quotes from an 18th-century alchemy text on the significance of these numbers in the Philosopher's Stone: "Out of five that is, the quintessence of its own substance ... The four elements, fire, air, water, and earth, are shown as proceeding directly from God; the three principles, sulphur, salt, and mercury, from Nature; the two 'seeds,' the male and female—Sol and Luna, or sulphur and mercury—from the metals; and the one Tincture, from art."6 The intention of this essay is to show that these five arithmetical symbols represent the semiotic principles of language fused to myth.

In Duchamp's introduction to the notes of the Green Box he states that "The machine with 5 hearts, the pure child of nickel and platinum must dominate the Jura-Paris road." The "machine with 5 hearts" is of course the Great Pyramid, the "pure child of nickel and platinum" is an old and cryptic allusion to the Philosopher's Stone, namely that set of elemental relationships holding the key to art. The "Jura-Paris road" defines the destination of art from its 19th-century avant-garde origins in Paris to its destiny on the Moon, expressed by the expansion and contraction ("oscillating density") of mercury and the eternal return to the female principle. This return is also emphasized in the cabalistic JOD (male)—HE (female)—VAU (joining)—HE (FEMALE). Such a shift is always the result of over-culturalization and signifies the abandonment of harmful cultural illusions. Analogously the art myth ends when non-objective paintings appear to be simply paint-covered canvases tacked to wooden stretchers.

What does such a complicated array of numbers and symbols mean to the structural anthropologist? Much of it comes under what has been called the resolution of the binary and unary principles. Simply stated, we strive to ignore the limitations of categories, assuming that the sum of all categories makes up the whole environment. Yet even the most comprehensive categories in natural languages omit and distort many entities. A category implies that things are both p and not-p; items are either in a category or outside of it. Things which are not named become taboo. Not referring to them is just one means of dealing with their ambiguous status as nonobjects. In Edmund Leach's words, "If we are only able to perceive the environment as composed of separate things by suppressing our recognition of the nonthings which fill the interstices, then of course what is suppressed becomes especially interesting." It seems evident that taboos always involve entities falling into more than one category, and these categories are invariably irreconcilable. For instance, works of art are simply physical constructions; but we respond to them as if they embodied feelings and ideas transcending the limits of materiality.

Leach provides us with examples of two taboo areas. The first are substances which on occasion become detached from the human body—in particular, spittle, pus, hair clippings, semen, menstrual blood, urine, feces, and mother's milk. These substances defy the boundaries of self; they are both personal and nonpersonal. Their anomalous character makes them excellent ingredients for magical rites. Secondly, men demand the existence of superhuman and immortal gods; but knowing that these creations have no material form, they fabricate an intermediate category of half humans/half gods. These include gods on earth, virgin mothers, prophets receiving the word of god, animal-like men and other doubtful creatures. Such beings have a foot in both worlds. Life is full of falsehood, life is full of opposites by constant and similar transitions that make make separations impossible. While this is get point I should point out to the reader that that the real truth of art lies in the ritual for material relationships. One can art.

Arrhe is to art as... 

grammatical: l'arbre of the painting

In this case Duchamp's assertions, but for the word mer pronoun from much more than stating the relation of an idea (art) to the parts of the parts of the is also stating the omalous and taboo construct we construct mediatly overlapped importantly he is describing the result of structuring between ideas and the Lévi-Strauss has stipulated Duchamp also of the feminine origin. Until differentiated relates to the other principle and nature.

All mythic structure appearance's sake operate according to an action and contrary representation, this is a matter of values that Edmund Genesis As Myth keep in mind the Genesis (written of course) and we analyze it through.

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...is the function of religion to mediate these opposites by constructing a world where they are separable and one is seen to triumph over the other. Similarly, art employs social conventions that make spirit triumph over matter.

While this is getting ahead of the explanation, I should point out that Duchamp was perfectly aware of art’s mediating function as a kind of ritual for materials incorporated into linguistic relationships. One of his notes in The Be(e)f! 1914 reads:

Arthur is to art what merde is to merde.

\[
\text{arthe} \ = \ \text{merde}
\]

grammatical:

\[
\text{i’arthe} \ of \ the \ painting \ is \ of \ the \ feminine \ gender.
\]

In this case Duchamp is making a number of assertions, but for our purposes I will just point out several. He is stating, in terms of sign functions, the formal relationships found in all works of art. And using the Saussurian convention he divides words into a fractional term: signifier, sound-image over signified or the concept of the word, thus arthe/art. He also states the same thing for the word merde, dividing its common French pronunciation from its meaning. Yet he is saying much more than “art equals shit.” Duchamp is stating that the relationships between the parts of an idea (art) are equal to the relationships between the parts of a material substance (art). He is also stating that both art and shit are anomalous and taboo categories, categories which are connected in a particular environment not only defines a taxonomic principle of language, but also influences all connected taxonomies and thus the general consistency of semantic relationships. In essence this means that words in a language have value functions and not truth-functions. As Jerrold Katz states in The Philosophy of Language, the reason logical empiricists failed in their analysis of natural language is that they mistook the rules of formal logic derived from metamathematics for the syntax of grammatical forms in ordinary language. However the difference is fundamental and critical. Without embarking upon a lengthy explanation, all forms of algebra and mathematical logic are semiotics with a single level of articulation. This means that a symbol in algebra can be assigned a single fixed meaning for all contexts. On the other hand, the “signs” of natural language, which are composed of words and/or morphemes, are connected by a double system of oppositions (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) on the planes of content and expression so that they possess a double articulation. Stated another way, the taxonomic principle of language allows for shifts in the meaning in words according to contextual changes which are accomplished phonetically and through the subtle logic of ordinary grammar. Double articulated semantic systems, while potentially more flexible and efficient than singly articulated systems, are also

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more imprecise. Consequently we can make art from language-based systems but not from communication or logic systems singly articulated. Doubtless no other principle has caused more confusion and misapplication by art critics, estheticians, and historians. The reason is fairly evident. All forms of art analysis (iconology, historical determinism, psychology, and formalism) deal with symbol interpretation or simple mappings of logic principles applied to works of art and their circumstances. Any real analysis of art, however, demands the use of linguistic techniques that take into consideration the peculiar idiosyncrasies of doubly articulated systems. The implications this raises for Western epistemology have been brilliantly developed by Michel Foucault in his book Les mots et les choses. The substance of his thesis is that we have traditionally structured our social systems (economics, art, speech, natural history, etc.) according to linguistic principles, while we have sought Cartesian precision in the singly articulated methods of analysis found in the hard sciences.

It is patent that these three notions—mathesis, taxonomia, genesis—designate so much separate domains as a solid grid of kinships that defines the general configuration of knowledge in the Classical age. Taxonomia is not in opposition to mathesis: it resides within it and is distinguished from it; for it too is a science of order—a qualitative mathesis. But understood in the strict sense mathesis is a science of equalities, and therefore of attributions and judgements; it is the science of truth. Taxonomia, on the other hand, treats of identities and differences; it is the science of articulations and classifications; it is the knowledge of beings. In the same way, genesis is contained within taxonomia, or at least finds in it its primary possibility. But taxonomia establishes the table of visible differences; genesis presupposes a progressive series; the first treats of signs in their spatial simultaneity, as a syntax; the second divides them up into an analogous of time, as a chronology.

Part of the deception is due to the fact that art analyses are based on taxonomic associations which are largely homogenous to the works they describe. It is hoped that the reader will forgive this long digression into linguistic principles. But it is absolutely necessary for an understanding of Marcel Duchamp's contribution to art. Duchamp's discovery was simple yet fundamental: he gradually perceived in the spring and summer of 1912 that Saussurian semiotics (those methods of analyzing language through sign functions) are consistent with the secrets of transcendental magic and alchemy. In my recent book, The Structure of Art (1970), I have dealt with the meaning of the semiotic triangle in terms of Lévi-Strauss's diagram of food preparation; variant triangles also appear in his analysis of kinship structures and other mediation functions. In alchemical terms the basic triangle may be conceived as the union of Sulphur (male-body), Mercury (female-soul), and Salt (androgyny-spirit). Semiotically, this reads as Referent (or entity signified), Signifier, and Signified—the three values needed to define the existence of a sign.

The semiotic triangle that Lévi-Strauss alludes to in food preparation, and sometimes in sexual relations, is of a different order. This is connected to ways of doing things, for instance: 1) Smoked food 2) Boiled food and 3) Roasted food—or 1) Monogamy 2) Promiscuity and 3) Celibacy. In my book the triangle unites 1) Mmetic art 2) Non-objective art and 3) the Ready-made. Surveying my own semiological analyses of various art works and Lévi-Strauss's variety of human habits, it seemed that this construction did not adequately represent the complete semiotic. But by adapting the Great Pyramid of Alchemy, and employing the qualities signified by the Four Elements, one arrives at a more complete semiotic configuration.

Translation of the Pyramid for food preparation and sexual relations produces these values: 1) Smoked food 2) Boiled food 3) Roasted food 4) Foods mixed and baked and 5) Naturally poisonous foods prepared for edibility; 1) Monogamy 2) Promiscuity 3) Celibacy 4) Polygamy and 5) Incest. For art the following types may be defined: 1) Mmetic art 2) Non-objective art 3) the Ready-made 4) Ambiguous art and 5) Contradictory or illogical art. Superficially these categories appear to have little to do with one another. It must be reiterated that each alchemical function is duplicated by several symbols, all having overlapping association. Quite normally, meanings are obscured in esoteric writings by mixing symbols in different sets.

The four essential materials possess characteristics that seem obvious enough on the surface, but these are more exclusive when viewed in relation to each other: for instance EARTH joins falsehood, evil, materiality and impenetrability; WATER relates to creativity, emotionalism, intuition, death and eventual rest; AIR signifies what is good, spiritual, essential and intellectually vital; while FIRE defines the principle function, impulsiveness, life, motion and instability.

In The Structure of Art, I attempt to use the Glossamatics techniques of the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev. Not only do these serve as a test in establishing compatible content and planes of expression for they suggest that works of art have the same deep-structure conception for the construction of semiotic language. Also there is evidence in Duchamp's writings to the same conclusion. As a result I find sentence structures for the Great Pyramid of Alchemy, and employing the qualities signified by the Four Elements, one arrives at a more complete semiotic configuration.

CONTRADICTION

(Much Surrealism and Dada)

AMBIGUITY

(Some Surrealism, Constructivism and Op Art)

SYNTACTIC EMPHASIS

MIMETIC EMPHASIS

SIMPLE DECLARATION

(Much Modern Art through 1915, and some Conceptual Art)

Fundamentally this defines the art by Marcel Duchamp during the years 1912 and through the summer of 1942 when during this period mirrors the emotional response to an enormous awakening (i.e., "...of feeling repossessed that is consummated. Q.E.D."

also there the painting Young Man and the Arturo Schwarz's analysis of the Ready-made in which some Dubuffet is quite revealing. The pair represent a sister relationship with both figures...
Sulphur (male) and Salt (androgynous as Referent)—the existence of

Strauss alludes times in sexual...this category and mind. 3) Roasted Strauss alludes for instance: and 3) Roasted food with one another. Strauss's variety of text in establishing compatible planes of content and planes of expression for works of art, they suggest that works of art conform to the same deep-structure conceptualizations responsible for the construction of sentence forms in ordinary language. Also there is enough evidence in Duchamp's writings to support the same conclusion. As a result I find the following sentence structures for the Great Pyramid: 1) Simple sentences 2) "Elliptical sentences" or sentences with an implied subject that must be understood contextually 3) "Phatic" expressions or phrases so idiomatic that they lose all meaning if a single word is altered 4) Sentences which are complex or compound or both, sentences which are compound in deep structure, and sentences possessing surface structure ambiguities 5) Ungrammatical sentences, "nonsense" sentences, and false analytical statements. These sentence categories cover all conceptual possibilities and correspond to the properties of 1) AIR 2) WATER 3) ETHER 4) FIRE and 5) EARTH. Semiotically these sentences may also be segregated according to their sign properties. Simple sentences have a single signifier and signified; elliptical sentences possess a signifier but no signified; phatic expressions use a signified but no signifier; complex, compound, and ambiguous sentences have more than one signifier and/or more than one signified; sentences in semantic conflict are made to "agree" by phonological manipulation (as in the case of poetry) but in any case show surface disagreement between signifier and signified.

**CONTRADICTION** (Much Surrealism and Dada)

**AMBICUITY** (Some Surrealism, Constructivism and Op Art)

**ELLISSP** (Non-objective Art)

**SIMPLE DECLARATION** (Much Modern Art through 1915, Pop Art, and some Conceptual Art)

Fundamentally this defines the discovery made by Marcel Duchamp during the winter of 1911-1912 and through the summer of 1912. His painting during this period mirrors the artist's emotional response to an enormous intellectual awakening (i.e., "...of feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated. Q.E.D."). For instance there is the painting Young Man and Girl in Spring completed in Neully during the spring of 1911. Arturo Schwarz's analysis of the iconography is quite revealing. The pair represent a brother-sister relationship with both figures stretching their arms towards an overhead tree. If we look back to Leach's diagram of the Genesis myth we find that in their original state Adam and Eve are siblings who, because Eve partakes of the tree of Knowledge, suffer expulsion and go on to live in the real world as man and wife, i.e., they undergo the transition from myth to reality. Duchamp's peculiar inscription on the back of the painting to his sister, moreover, supports this interpretation. Just as important is the centrally positioned figure of Mercury or Hermes imprisoned in a glass, alchemical vessel, signifying Mercury's potential power to unite opposites and spread knowledge. In this case the Sun (King) and the Moon (Queen) are about to be joined as a function of the Great Work. (See also the author's notes for Paradise (1910) in Arturo Schwarz's The Complete Work of Marcel Duchamp.)

A caption on the back of a painting finished toward the end of the same year—"Marcel Duchamp nu (equisse) Jeune homme triste dans un Rien"—explains clearly enough that the artist himself is the "sad young man." In alchemical terms sadness or melancholia represent the transition (premonition) from worldly attitudes to enlightenment. The train signifies the mechanical means towards such understanding.

The ideal world Adam and Eve in 1912 to the theme May of 1912 Duch's peculiar inscription the Queen Surrounded Nudes" is perhaps forces let loose to alchemical arts. Here parent that the pa- didactic attempt to artist's intellectual p-chemical secrets of bolizes for Ducham and WATER in the progressively denu-

One might well point in Duchamp's theme of 1912 during leaching to Marcel Jean third-class by local should last longer. In other words, has never particularly since to his technically mo- the first notes a Stripped Bare by a hypothesis for this v-theory nevertheless

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The ideal world of happiness as typified by Adam and Eve in Paradise was transformed in 1912 to the theme of the King and Queen. In May of 1912 Duchamp painted *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes*. The "Swift Nudes" are perhaps the "Sons of Hermes," those forces let loose to inform us of the secrets of the hermetic arts. Here it becomes increasingly apparent that the paintings of this period are a didactic attempt to biographically illustrate the artist's intellectual progress in unraveling the alchemical secrets of art. Eventually Mercury symbolizes for Duchamp the combined forces of AIR and WATER in the transition from mimetic to progressively denuded non-objective art.

One might well make a case that the pivot-point in Duchamp's career occurred in the summer of 1912 during his visit to Munich. According to Marcel Jean, "he traveled to Germany third-class by local trains, so that the journey should last longer." This visit, or the artist's reluctance, has never been adequately explained, particularly since the stay in Munich produced his technically most accomplished paintings plus the first notes and drawings for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. My hypothesis for this visit is unsubstantiated, but a theory nevertheless that dovetails with the artist's earlier and later iconography. Duchamp in his reading had come close to the alchemical origins of art, close enough perhaps to know that very few books on the subject reveal the real secrets of esoteric science. Possibly Duchamp found that a certain necessary text or manuscript on alchemy existed in Munich. This would account for any possible remorse or trepidation. Going there he would believe in art, returning he would know art. This also explains the studies for the Virgin in July 1912; the painting *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride* in July and August; and finally, *The Bride* in August.

Since art is mythic, and therefore female, Duchamp's discovery would lead to a sudden change in her sexual status, one where his conquest of the Virgin would not be comprehended for nearly sixty years.

Duchamp's use of the iconography of "the machine with 5 hearts" is rare. In 1918 as a study for *The Large Glass* he produced *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass)* with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour. Here a central lens is balanced on the point of an obelisk and aligned under the apex of a distorted pyramid. In reality one of the "Oculist Witnesses" located underneath is a Masonic symbol for omniscience. The distorted obelisk
is a "reading" for a projected life, while the pyramid is, of course, the symbol for all the possibilities in mediating life's activities. The corner of the pyramid between AIR and FIRE touches the right side of the Glass, thus informing us that this historically represents the beginnings of art. The pyramid extends off the left side of the Glass, signifying that in 1918 art still had a future before the stripping of the Bride was complete. Significantly, the corner missing unites EARTH and WATER, or that art defining the last formal transitions of non-objective art. In the notes for the Boxing Match in The Large Glass, Duchamp indirectly specified that the last stages of non-objective art will appear "realistic" to those viewing it. One sure clue that the subject of this glass is the de-evolution of non-objective art is in the work's title. Grammatically the title presents the infinite, while a very rough interpretation of the deep-structure of this title would yield: [You] look at [it]. All in all this title has four kernel sentences in its deep-structure. In esoteric literature the infinitive represents the infinite, while a very rough interpretation of the deep-structure of this title would yield: [You] look at [it]. All in all this title has at least four kernel sentences in its deep-structure. The Glass itself contains four types of optical ambiguity, thus mixing FIRE and AIR, or ambiguous art with non-objective art. Duchamp intimates that historically such art ends when it is phonetically (formally) exhausted, thus completing the corner edge of the Great Pyramid.

A work such as To be Looked at ... illuminates the underlying meaning of Barnett Newman's Broken Obelisk of 1967. The obelisk, and its inversion over the pyramid, recognizes the fulfillment of Duchamp's earlier prophecy. In Masonic symbology the two forms represent the conjoin-
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ing of human intellect with the secrets of the
Great Pyramid, in this case the completion of
modern art through its comprehension.
Pyramids again appear in *Handmade Stereopticon Slides* (1918-19). But now they are re-
lected with double opposing forms both below
and above. This octahedron with its elongated
superstructure has a different meaning. It rep-
resents the values of the Great Pyramid, culmin-
ating in domination by the Ready-made, but in-
verted to show their completion. The upper
point of the polygon represents the same com-
mapping intelligence as its lower counterpart.
Moreover it signifies a higher degree of wisdom
and understanding: recognition that involvement
in art is no longer necessary. The vanishing
points of the octahedron extend to the horizon.
Marcel Jean quotes Duchamp as labeling this
superimposed exercise in perspective a “collage
in space.”* As a rule collages function by jux-
posing materials with different sign values al-
though they have the same surface meaning.
In this case it is the surface meaning which is
obscure and the underlying meaning which is
the same. In both mythic and esoteric terms the
sea represents the caldron of life, good and evil,
change in all of its manifestations: the dense
ether. The air is cold ether. Yet the air in the
higher firmament is touched by the sun’s rays. At
a very high altitude the sky transforms into the
ideal and absolute realm of heaven, a state
where concern with mundane matters is irrele-
vant.*

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JACK BURNHAM

In 1912 Marcel Duchamp discovered that all works of art conform to five types of sentence structure: A) Simple sentences B) Compound, complex and ambiguous sentences C) "Ready-made utterances" D) Elliptical sentences and E) Sentences with some disagreement between subject and predicate. He realized that as art these sentence structures have a particular diachronic relationship to each other, thereby defining the historical trajectory that modern art was to follow for the next six decades.

If, as Claude Lévi-Strauss maintains, myths function phonetically at the lowest level of articulation, syntactically and semantically at the next level, and through unconscious cultural discourse at a third level of articulation, then quite probably the same is true of art. There are, however, fundamental differences between the communication modes. Any writing or string of spoken words subjected to linguistic analysis is considered to be an ordered and finite text. The stories recounted to anthropologists in ethnological research, sometimes second or third hand, are only partially ordered and provisionally fixed texts, since verbal myths undergo constant variation. Linguistically, works of art are considered unordered and finite texts. From a semiotic standpoint these resist segmentation by the usual means.

If this is true, then the phenomenon of art must function on a level beyond the normal analogical resources of poetry. Octavio Paz, the Mexican poet and essayist, alludes to this in his study of Lévi-Strauss's techniques:

The poetic function (I am citing Jakobson again) transfers the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination. The formulation of every verbal message comprises two operations: selection and combination... Selection is carried out "on the basis of similarity or dissimilarity, synonymy or antonymy, while combination, the construction of the sequence, rests on contiguity." Poetry turns this order around and "promotes equivalence to the rank of a constituent process of the sequence." Equivalence works on all levels of the poem: sound (rhyme, meter, accents, alliterations, etc.), and the semantic (metaphors and metonymies).

According to Paz, poetry and mythic tales operate according to parallel categories of equivalency. But he misses the point which Lévi-Strauss seems to have mastered; namely that the mechanisms of poetry do not constitute all the levels of analogy to be found in a work of art. One plane usually provides the basis on another. Many of Lévi-Strauss's equations are nothing more than analogies to sentence structure—although there may be no real indication that he is aware of this. The fact that a number of sentences can be read, and normally these function within a chain of semiotic analogy.

One of the linguists responsible for this discovery was Louis Hjelmslev. His book *A Theory of Language* attempts to formalize the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure by adding the idea of a "algebra of signs" is feasible. With the algebraic techniques have limitations for modern linguists, their real value lies in the beauty, elegance, and simplicity of the separation of sentence components. This approach recognizes that language is a complex system (semantics and syntax) which are interrelated through commutation relationships and limitations.

It would seem that the double
of art are considered from a semiotic standpoint by the usual means. The phenomenon of art beyond the normal entry, Octavio Paz, the alludes to this in his

I am citing Jakobson's definition of equivalence from the axis of combination, verbal message construction and combination ("On the basis of simile, synonymy or antonymy, construction of the sequence."). Poetry turns this into an equivalence between the parts of the sequence. Therefore, concepts of analogy are sometimes apparent in art works, but normally these function within a broader context of semiotic analogy.

One of the linguists responsible for this discovery was Louis Hjelmslev. His Prolegomena to a Theory of Language attempts to extend the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure so that an "algebra of signs" is feasible. While his Glossomatic techniques have limitations for contemporary linguists, their real value lies in a symmetry, elegance, and simplicity that reveals the separation of sentence components on all levels. This approach recognizes that languages consist of content (semantics and syntax) and expression (phonological analysis) which are connected to each other through commutation (i.e., reciprocal relationships and limitations).

It would seem that the double articulation inherent to both language and art is quite similar: hence formalism is to art what phenomenology is to language. Both analyze or account for the organization of phenomena at the sensory or physiological level. What must be considered the equivalents of semantics and syntax in art (content) can only be ordered through the agency of formal organization but these are not necessarily visual. Moreover, it is apparent that no coherent theory of art semantics can be based on formalism alone. Note the in some sort of reference to the notion of equivalence from the axis of combination. This is a discovery that seems to be no real indication that he is aware of this, or the fact that a number of sentence structures are possible. Moreover, formal and verbal equivalences are sometimes apparent in art works, but normally these function within a broader context of semiotic analogy.

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tions, however, leave something to be desired
in terms of diagramming all the linguistic possi-
bilities of art. At the time I was writing I did not
fully appreciate the importance of Noam Chom-
sky's theory of transformational grammar, nor
the implications of "deep structure" for
understanding sentence construction. Mention is made
of Chomsky, however, and the significance of his
theories for understanding art with ambiguous
structures (e.g., when a sentence possesses more
than one kernel sentence in its deep structure). Also I have made a very incomplete explanation of how
neutralization and concord define the para-
digmatic and syntagmatic features providing the
illusion of change in modern art.

Until the advent of Zellig S. Harris's research
and Noam Chomsky's Syntactic Structures in
1957, linguists analyzed sentences according to
the conventional categories of grammar or what is
known as constituent structure. Chomsky's
main point was that many sentences cannot be
understood through existing methods of parsing.
Supported by mathematical proofs, he hypo-
thesized that all sentence forms can be reduced to
one or more kernel sentences. The kernel
sentence is a basic linguistic structure consisting of
no more than a subject (determiner and noun)
and a predicate (the present tense of any verb,
including an object if the verb is transitive). Many
distinctions of conventional grammar are dis-
carded by Chomsky's theory. In their place are
word markers and transformational rules provid-
ing directions for the reconstruction of normal
sentences (surface structure) from the underlying
deep structure. The theory behind these trans-
formations is intricate and still undergoing con-
siderable revision.

Chomsky's assertion of the primacy of the ker-
nel sentence is an important issue for all struc-
tural studies. It appears that simple declarative
sentences have much the same consistency as
logical or mathematical propositions—a unity of
subject and predicate through the copula—but
by means of double articulation. Herbert Simon,
one of the pioneers in artificial intelligence re-
search, supports the essentiality of the kernel
sentence. In a conclusion to a paper on decision
making he states, "...ordinary mathematical
reasoning, hence the ordinary logic of declarative
statements, is all that is required for a theory
of design processes."4 The child psychologist Jean
Piaget also seems to side with Chomsky on the
matter of the "formative kernel," but with dif-
ferent conclusions as to its meaning. He sees
deep structure not as the result of innate syn-
tactical mechanisms, but as a biological dialectic
("equilibration") which fuses the brain's prac-
tical functions into a mechanism for transforming
temporal formation (experience) into non-temp-
oral interconnection (sentence formation).5

One of the better semiotic explications of the
subject-predicate relationship is in the work of
Michel Foucault. He points out that all verbs
and verb forms begin with the copula, the verb
to be: "So that the essential function of the verb
to be is to relate all language to the representa-
tion that it designates." Foucault also assures
us that it is the generality of naming words, par-
ticularly nouns, that allows us to designate attrib-
utes for it in the form of propositions. In other
words, the multiple possibilities afforded by
limited taxonomies make general (and ambigu-
ous) propositions in natural language possible.

One of the problems encountered in Du-
champ's titling and iconography is that of treat-
ing the subject and predicate as if they were
the same as the planes of content and expres-
sion. In Foucault's terminology all language
manifestations, including speech, texts, and art
objects are subsumed under the heading of rep-
resentation. He insists that it is the conjoin-
ing of subject and predicate (i.e., the proposition
itself) that results in the representation, and not
the parts (of speech) themselves: "The relations
between the elements of the proposition are iden-
tical with those of representation; but this iden-
tity is not carefully arranged point by point, so
that every substance is designated by a substan-
tive and every accident by an adjective. The
identity here is total and a matter of nature..."6
Thus the analysis of a sentence or a work of art
by glossamaticians is carried out holistically,
and not according to constituent structure. Each
signified and signifier results from segregating
specific relations found in an entire proposition.

At this stage, it might be well to outline the
semiotic relations of the various sentence types
as they correspond to works of art. Needless to
say, Duchamp gives us more or less specific no-
tions of these in his writings. And considering
the state of linguistics at the time he was writing,
he can hardly be blamed for their incompleteness.
Duchamp's real verification of art's linguistic na-
ture are the ready-mades themselves.

Simple sentences possess signifieds and signi-
fiers for the planes of Content and Expression.
Complex and ambiguous sentences need two
equations or more with multiple sets of signifieds
or multiple sets of signifiers, depending on whether the ambiguities in question are visual or conceptu-
\[
\frac{Sr}{Sd_1} = \frac{Sr}{Sd_2} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{Sr}{Sd_2} = \frac{Sr}{Sd_2}
\]

Ready-mades function with a Plane of Content
but no Plane of Expression in what Roland
Barthes terms the "Real System" or the basic
equation describing the art itself. A Plane of
Expression is constructed for ready-mades by shift-
ing analysis to the Connotative System at a high-
er level. All nonobjective art reverses this pro-
cedure by recovering the Plane of Content on
the higher Metalanguage level. So-called contra-
dictory or illogical sentences possess the same
structure as declarative sentences, but where
signifieds in the Plane of Content point to the non-
sensical nature of art, this lack of meaning is always "rectified" by explanation of hidden rela-

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**GRAPHIC:**

PLANE OF CONTENT

PLANE OF EXPRESSION

---

**TABLE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plane of Content</th>
<th>Plane of Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Signifiers</td>
<td>Expression Signifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproducing</td>
<td>Reconstructing</td>
</tr>
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**PROOF:**

\[
\frac{Sr}{Sd_1} = \frac{Sr}{Sd_2} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{Sr}{Sd_2} = \frac{Sr}{Sd_2}
\]
Duchamp proceeds to explain a certain fundamental conclusion of the semiotic which occurs in nonobjective art.

And on the other hand:

the vertical axis considered separately turning on itself, a generating line at a right angle e.g. will always determine a circle in the 2 cases 1st turning in the direction A, 2nd direction B—

Thus, if it were still possible in the case of the vertical axis at rest, to consider 2 contrary directions for the generating line G, the figured engendered (whatever it may be) can no longer be called left or right of the axis—As there is gradually less differentiation from axis to axis, i.e., as all the axes gradually disappear in a fading verticality the front and back, the reverse and the obverse acquire a circular significance; the right and the left which are the 4 arms of the front and back melt along the verticals.

This obscure statement is the crux of Duchamp's historical semiotic. He begins by describing the disappearance of the signifier and signified which occurs as there is a merger of the ready-made and nonobjective art. The first six lines are clarified by another note in the Box of 1914:

The game of barrel (roll, horizontal spin) is a very beautiful "sculpture" of cleverness (skill)...

The "sculpture" in question consists of transforming a ready-made into non-objective art or vice versa. (How this is accomplished will be explained later in the essay.) But then Duchamp amends the conditions by stipulating that such a figure, if allowed to roll in either direction, will lose all orientation vis-à-vis right and left. This means that the Plane of Content of a work (left side) and its Plane of Expression (right side) collapse into a single sign.

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As there is gradually less differentiation from axis to axis, i.e., as all the axes gradually disappear in a fading verticality... The "fading verticality" represents a predilection in all non-objective art to gravitate towards the appearance of a ready-made, i.e., ascend the apex of the Great Pyramid. As the formal relationships of the art drop away one by one, the final two define the Plane of Expression itself: these consist of the making process and the concept of set. At this point the work seems to be a ready-made without reality being one.

Considering the fundamental dichotomy between Nature and Culture in Duchamp's historical semiotic, his values for the concept of evolution from myth to reality can be understood through his carefully chosen diagram for comprehending all language-based systems. One is not completely predetermined to the singular by logical selection rather...
Explanation of certain fundamental semiological concepts and their application to art history.

1. The vertical axis at rest, directions for the general engendered (what is called left or right) are gradually less defined than personal origins. Since symbols are fixed, one with collective rather than personal origins. Symbols are anomalous and sacred; thus the symbol to sign is crucial in Western art. By nature, symbols are unfixed relationships where the semiotic space is the adumbration of visual syntax and symbolic meaning. Renaissance space — as Duchamp has implied — provides a set of unified relationships where the semiotic convention is integrated with symbolic representations. The Hunt of the Unicorn, a late 15th century tapestry in the Cloisters Collection, eminently illustrates my point. In this scene a zoological symbol of Christ is about to be run down by a contemporary party of hunters. The only instance where Duchamp imparts his values for the Cooking Triangle, the evolution from myth to reality as specified in Edmund Leach's analyses, and the linguistic characteristics for the Great Pyramid outlined so far, we discover a somewhat clearer diagram for language-based systems. Once its implications are understood, the singular importance of this diagram for comprehending art cannot be underestimated. For Duchamp the "beauty of indifference" exists in knowing that esthetics is a matter of logical selection rather than blind choice.

What remains for art historians, and a task of prime importance, is a comprehensive semiological study of Medieval and Renaissance art. This represents an area of study where the shift from symbol to sign is crucial in Western art. By nature, symbols are anomalous and sacred; they mean one thing to the public, but at least two different things for the initiated. As Peter Fingst notes, originally the symbol was a sign of recognition, one with collective rather than personal origins. Since symbols and signs possess no validity as esthetic form, esthetic stems from the gradual adumbration of visual syntax and symbolic meaning. Renaissance space — as Duchamp has implied — provides a set of unified relationships where the semiotic convention is integrated with symbolic representations. The Hunt of the Unicorn, a late 15th century tapestry in the Cloisters Collection, eminently illustrates my point. In this scene a zoological symbol of Christ is about to be run down by a contemporary party of hunters. The only instance where Duchamp imparts his values for the Cooking Triangle, the evolution from myth to reality as specified in Edmund Leach's analyses, and the linguistic characteristics for the Great Pyramid outlined so far, we discover a somewhat clearer diagram for language-based systems. Once its implications are understood, the singular importance of this diagram for comprehending art cannot be underestimated. For Duchamp the "beauty of indifference" exists in knowing that esthetics is a matter of logical selection rather than blind choice.

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of the combat marble: tact of the marble at the
beginning of the clockwork and attack- contact at the 2nd
attack- Release of the 2nd
the prehistoric beginnings stems. The 1st Summit most
Renaissance art, which is
of mimetic conventions
the end of art based upon
very sharp attack" brings the
emiotic to the 2nd Summit.

As in alchemy, the color red is used to signify
base instincts: sexual lust, male power, and
physical instincts unformed by wisdom. This
blind mechanism allows us to sense the presence
of art without comprehending it. The red spring
is responsible for holding the Garments aloft.

The latching mechanism at G, D, and D' is im-
portant. Culturally, the engagement of the lever
at R represents the Classical impulse in action.
When this is engaged, the gears by means of a
rack and pinion system-keep the Bride's Gar-
ment aloft, thus holding the veils of the art
myth before our eyes. Duchamp specifies,
though, that disengagement of this mechanism
is not final since the mechanism works on the
principle of an automatic door close. A return
to DG implies a return to the classic principles
of equilibrium and self-knowledge. Comprehen-
sion of this obscure but important historical
mechanism demands a very elementary under-
standing of mechanical principles: "Mecanisme
de la pudeur/Pudeur mécanique" or "Modesty's
mechanism is to be mechanically modest."

Marcel Duchamp in an interview with James
Johnson Sweeney: "...art is produced by a suc-
cession of individuals expressing themselves; it is
not a question of progress. Progress is merely an
enormous pretension on our part. There was no
progress for example in Carot over Phidias. And
"abstract" or "naturalistic" is merely a fashion-
able form of talking- today. It is no problem:
an abstract painting may not look at all abstract
in 50 years."

Duchamp specifies in his introduction to the
notes in the Green Box that "This headlight child
could, graphically, be a comet, which would have
its tail in front..." The "comet" (Duchamp)
was to create all possible variations and combina-
tions of art necessary to outline the semiotic be-
tween 1913 and 1926, thus anticipating every type of art
to be produced for the next fifty-five years. For
the most part this was achieved with standard-
ized objects, since these are sufficient to articu-
late semiotic relationships. In many instances
Duchamp's constructions are not true ready-
mades, but rather are the principles of ambiguity,
ellipsis, declaration, and contradiction integrated
into assortments of found objects. As we shall
see, the titling of works of art plays an essential
role in defining a work's position semiotically;
frequently, in fact, a work's aesthetic validity de-
PENDS upon a title; in other cases titles serve as
linguistic explications. Yet some of Duchamp's-
canniness is due to the fact that he constantly
shifted the purposes of his titles; on the surface
they display no perceivable pattern. The 3 Standard Stoppages is obviously a commentary on non-objective art, and as such its descriptive title acts as a Metalanguage signified, specifying the artist’s intention since the piece has no perceivable content. Originally Duchamp dropped three one-meter threads, held one meter high, on to three stretched canvases painted Prussian blue (notice the use of Prussian blue corresponding to WATER and putrefaction). These were glued down, the canvases trimmed and glued to glass plates, and the results then boxed with a corresponding set of templates. The objective here is a comparison of doubly and singly articulated semiotic signs. The piece is merely a box with certain objects in it; nevertheless Duchamp is saying that all non-objective works of art are simply objects devoid of any meaningful content. Consequently in a Metalanguage system the signifier replacing a signifier in the normal Plane of Content is a physical description of the art object. He clarifies this in one of his notes for the Green Box.

To lose the possibility of recognizing (identifying) 2 similar objects—

- 2 colors, 2 faces
- 2 hats, 2 forms whatever to reach the Impossibility of sufficient visual memory to transfer from one like object to another the memory imprint.

—Same possibility with sounds; with brain facts17 The idea of a “memory imprint” corresponds to what has been called nonobjective art as a generic form derived from mimetic conventions. Duchamp is posing a question: namely, how far does nonobjective art proceed in the process of dropping formal signifiers before we are unable to recognize an object as art? It would seem that the validity of the nonobjective impulse depends absolutely upon its historical derivation from art with content.

The one-meter threads become something other than the meter unit codified by a National Bureau of Standards, just as—as in the case of all articulated systems—the letter a will always mean the same quantity or entity as long as it remains in an algebraic equation; but as soon as it is talked about with language, it becomes distorted (and transformed) by various descriptive elaborations. Michel Foucault suggests the same difference in his discussion of logical and linguistic comparison:

After being analyzed according to a given unit and the relations of equality or inequality, the like is analyzed according to its evident identity and differences: differences that can be thought in the order of differences. However, this order or generalized form of comparison can be established only according to its position in the body of our acquired knowledge; the absolute character we recognize in what is simple concerns not the being of things but rather the manner in which they can be known.8

So in effect, the “standard stoppages” are no longer standard but deviate from a norm, displaying somewhat the same consistency as Process Art. The thread and templates are merely materials—as Pollock stressed paint was in his paintings—materials explicitly defined by a making process given over to gravity and chance. Duchamp has nearly succeeded in erasing the “memory imprint” which is also necessary to Pollock’s art. So here in the Stoppages “Fidée de la Fabrication”19 is all that remains.

Bicycle Wheel is the deceptive title of the first ready-made. A 1951 version was eventually signed and dated in green ink, intimating that it deals with subject-predicate contradiction and therefore qualifies as an “assisted ready-made.” In conversations with Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp emphasized its chance aspect—and this is purposefully misleading. Although the work is seemingly meaningless and could be given any number of interpretations, such is not the case. In philosophy, one encounters “analytic” and “synthetic” propositions. Roughly described, synthetic sentences are statements whose truth is contingent on facts or conditions external to the sentence itself. Analytic sentences are true by virtue of their own internal consistency, both semantic and syntactic. In the statement All bachelors are married men, for example, the two terms bachelors and married men are mutually exclusive; therefore the sentence is inherently false. In the same sense Bicycle Wheel is functionally contradictory. By definition a kitchen stool is something to sit on, while a bicycle wheel moves along the ground supporting the weight of a rider. In this instance both functions are nullified through deliberate juxtaposition which transforms their status into a false analytical proposition.

The Bottle Dryer of 1914 is Duchamp’s first true ready-made. Actually since it has also been entitled a Bottle Drainer, Bottle Rack, and Hedgehog, the title is not particularly important—although “hedgehog” does imply something beyond the superficial resemblance that the restaurant appliance has for the animal. In an essay by Isaiah Berlin, the philosopher comments on a line written by the Greek poet Archilochus, “...‘mark one of the deepest differences which divides writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general.’ The one type, ‘the fox,’ consists of men who live by ideas scattered and often unrelated to one another. But the man of the other type, the ‘hedgehog’, relates ‘everything to a central vision, one system more or less coherent or articulate...a single, universal, organizing principle...’20 And so an artist who knows how to choose a ready-made also has the same synoptic vision in terms of all art. All the effective ready-mades are standard manufactured objects, neither precious nor worthless, but possessing some intermediate value. Their most important quality is their inherent contact with both Nature and Culture; therefore ready-mades are in some way affected by or function with the
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ate from a norm, dis-
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Schwarz, Duchamp
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alse analytical prop-
help of the natural elements. The Bottle Dryer
ists in the evaporation of water. A subse-
quently lost ready-made of 1915 is entitled Tiré
epingles, an idiomatic expression which
as "well groomed" or literally, in English,
alled at 4 Pins. The object was an unpainted,
anized, sheet steel chimney ventilator, the
placed on chimney copings. These turn in
wind, protecting flues from violent down-
more than likely this object mediates
four prime Elements: it protects the FIRE
against wind (AIR), dust (EARTH), and rain
(WATER) and turns to the four points of the com-
ness.
ments. The Bottle Dryer is entitled L'objet non-fabriqué (EARTH). A chimney ventilator, the object was an unpainted, iron copings. These turn in flues from violent down-swept drafts; it protects the FIRE (EARTH), and rain our points of the com-
mponents. The Bottle Dryer is entitled L'objet non-fabriqué (EARTH).

A more enigmatic piece of the same year is the suspended snow shovel, In Advance of a Broken Arm. When Duchamp was questioned about the hanging of various ready-mades from the ceiling, his usual answer was an excuse that he was tired of seeing sculptures always situated on ped-
estals. But this had nothing to do with his reasoning; his purposes are semantic and syntactical. A snow shovel suspended out of reach is merely an object deprived of its use and functional meaning (nonobjective art, hence WATER). But Duchamp reassigns this object's meaning in a very curious way. The phrase "in advance of a broken arm" is nonsensical and an incomplete sentence, thus related to both EARTH and WA-
TER. So the shovel is an omen of the corner of the Great Pyramid represented by frozen water (Cold), and signifying the final stages of nonobjective art. The "broken arm" comes when art is no longer served by the process of fab-
rication.

The ready-made Comb, chosen and inscribed in 1916, is an ordinary steel comb with the words lettered on its back edge: "3 OU 4 GOUTTES DE HAUTEUR N'ONT RIEN A FAIRE AVEC LA SAUV-
AGERIE" (3 or 4 drops of loftiness have nothing to do with savagery). Any interpretation of the Comb is open to dispute, so my analysis is by no means definitive. The Comb appears to be, and probably is, an assisted ready-made because its contact with a natural element is questionable. Duchamp's inscription implies that WATER has nothing to do with (it) savagery. Looking back at the semiotic diagram, we observe again that WA-
TER refers to nonobjective art in which the final stages reduce art to pure materials, hence Nature or savagery. We also know that there is a consider-
able amount of lofty intellectualism attached to nonobjective art. Is he saying that the WATER that comes in contact with the Comb, namely the intellectual justifications which validate non-
objective art, have nothing to do with the natur-
alizing tendencies behind the art itself? Possibly. There is also Duchamp's note in the Green Box of September 1915 which refers to a comb as a kind of space divider; this is done under the heading of Rattle. The comb, he states, exerts "proportional control" over the hair by means of the number of teeth it has, its broken teeth, and its curvature. Is it possible that Duchamp is looking at the comb as a kind of taxonomic structure, one that would define a natural con-
tinuum (head of hair) into a given set of terms (or in this case, spaces)? A famous linguistic ex-
ample of this may be found in the relativity of terms used in naming the color spectrum. A comparison of terms used in different languages shows that each language makes its own unique divisions of the spectrum; there is never a one-
to-one correspondence between terms in various languages.

The comb relates to an assisted ready-made, Duchamp's piece for Walter Arensberg entitled With Hidden Noise. It is a ball of twine sealed at both ends by brass plates screwed together. Arensberg placed a secret object inside the ball so that only the noise of this rattle was known. This corresponds to the "content" of nonobjec-
tive paintings which seems to be "there" but really is not; only its "bouquet" or "memory" is present.

Duchamp insisted on a different interpretation for Comb. A remote possibility is the fact that the upper point of the alchemist's Pentagram repre-

Duchamp insisted on a different interpretation for Comb. A remote possibility is the fact that the upper point of the alchemist's Pentagram repre-
sents the same values as the Apex of the Great Pyramid, uniting the spirit, intellect, and the head of the body. Thus the comb's relation to the head associates it with the seat of the intellec-
consequently the ready-made. Still, there is no more plausible interpretation. The teeth of comb form a set within finite boundaries—Carl Andre's floor units define sets. This comb's enigmatic prescription turns it into the quadrant of EARTH on the Great Pyramid. The famous Urinal is an "Assisted ready-made," according to Arturo Schwarz; Duchamp turned it on its back and gave it the title 'Fountain.' The physical displacement makes it nearly less recognizable and the title intimates that the piece is a legitimate variety of sculpture needless to say, abstract sculpture. Both transformations overlap, shifting the urinal towards category of nonobjective art (i.e., "R. Mutt"). While in Buenos Aires in 1919, Duchamp sent instructions to his sister Suzanne for the preparation of an assisted ready-made entitled Unhappy Ready-made. The project consisted of hanging a geometry book out a window for a number of days and nights, exposing it to all sorts of weather. In this instance Duchamp used the quadrant AIR of the Great Pyramid. This means that the work represents a simple declarative proposition, e.g., an art object with content "naturalized" due to some direction activity of the artist. This act provides the notion (unhappy) for the Plane of Expression. The work is simply the choice of some substantive and its exposition through appropriate directions for fabrication.

Duchamp's present to Walter Arensberg of Air, a 50 cc. glass ampoule of air fabricated this, he again chose to work with the qualities of AIR. In this case his desire is to make "content" for an art work. Encapsulating air completes the making process. A printed label on the glass reading "Serum Physiologique" is a statement of the essentiality of the alchemical AIR. This corresponds to another note in Green Box which reads:

- Establish a society in which the individual is to pay for the air he breathes (air meters); imprisonment in rarefied air, in case of non-payment. Simple asphyxiation if necessary (cut off air).

AIR, of course, remains the archsymbol of linguistic communication and ritual. He seems to be saying that we take these things too much for granted because they have the same commonsensical as does air. Duchamp may also be suggesting that nonobjective art represents a kind of elided air, if not a vacuum.

Fresh Widow, a semi-ready-made of 1920, consists of a miniature French window, painted green, with sheets of black leather covering window panes. Except for the wordplay between "Fresh Widow" and "French window," this piece precipitates almost no comprehension; yet its green paint indicates that the window is concerned with the element EARTH.
Moreover one of Arturo Schwarz's observations on the ready-made appear apt. For instance he notes the female sexual symbology implied in a window opening and the French colloquial term for guiftne: "widow." In this respect, the space behind the window appears to be pitch dark, but upon opening the window we see otherwise. There are, moreover, strong sexual taboos against relations with widows in many societies, just as there are taboos against incestuous dealings, remembering that EARTH and Incest are equated. So in essence what Duchamp may be saying is that the delights of having intercourse with youngish widows have to be weighed against sexual guilt (consequently castration) accompanying such pleasures.

The Door: 11 rue Larrey is in accord with the principle of syntactical ambiguity. Such ambiguity depends upon a perceiver experiencing split second shifts between various interpretations of a phenomenon. Duchamp had a door made which opened and shut on two door frames. Consequently the door is open when it is closed and closed when open. So the ambiguity in question is not expressly perceptual nor physical but conceptual.

By far one of the most sophisticated ready-mades is Why Not Sneeze Rose Selavy? Its title announces that the work joins two quadrants of Great Pyramid, EARTH and WATER. The title takes the form of a question with an implicit subject. If we transform this into a kernel sentence the result is the command "[Rose Selavy] sneeze." But at the same time, since sneezing is usually involuntary, the title combines partial ellipsis with nonsense. The resultant is a set of elements that simulate nonobjective art but are combined with other components to form a hidden set based on analogical props, hence suggesting nonsense art.

Much has been made of the fact that the bird cage contains agar cubes which are not sugar. The artist had duplicated 152 marble cubes which exactly resemble sugar cubes. This again is the essence of nonobjective art: "To lose the possibility of recognizing/identifying 2 similar objects." Duchamp has also stressed the differences between weights and heat coefficients of sugar and marble. These are important clues, but they should not be taken in Duchamp's sense. The false sugar cubes in the bird cage are absurd by themselves. But the cage contains two other items: a French rectal thermometer and a cuttlebone. All the objects together form a set and they function by virtue of the cage's excluded occupant.

It becomes necessary to know that a cuttlebone is a kind of mineral supplement which is placed in a cage to balance a bird's diet. On preliminary examination the four objects—cage, sugar or marble cubes, thermometer, and cuttlebone—seem to decompose an empty class or a set of items with no attributes in common.
mon. Yet if we complete the natural opposition expressed by the bird cage, the result is a different set: (bird), cubes, thermometer, and cuttlebone. Now various intersections between classes become apparent. The cuttlebone is composed of minerals—just as the marble cubes are mainly limestone. Yet the cuttlebone is food for a displaced bird just as the sugar cubes are not really food but displace the bird. Such a set relationship is “interconnected” since it is not only transitive, but reflexive and symmetric. On the other hand, the rectal thermometer—in spite of Duchamp’s suggestion—does not measure the heat of sugar and marble, since these are both approximately room temperature, but rather measures the body heat of the missing bird in relation to the “cold” marble. This coldness, which Duchamp refers to in his conversation with Arturo Schwarz, is really the corner between EARTH and WATER of the Great Pyramid. Thus the thermometer’s relation to the set of objects is “connected” or simply transitive. But it was included by Duchamp to emphasize the linguistic area dominating this semi-ready-made.

In conclusion, I will touch upon Duchamp’s mural of 1918, Tu m’ve, a complex and rather atypical effort. The subject is the illusions that historically define the course of nonobjective art. This is a theme that Duchamp returns to again and again, representing virtually an obsession. A hint to his feelings may be gained from Arturo Schwarz’s thoughts on the title: “Although the pronoun m’ in the title could be followed by any verb at all so long as its first letter is a vowel, the phrase is really a polite contraction for the French colloquialism tu m’emmêderes (you bore me), a feeling which could perhaps be referred both to the tedium involved in making the work and the person who commissioned it.” Duchamp’s boredom stemmed from both of these, but more than likely also from the subject of the painting. In effect he is saying that the right equal what is to the left. This sign painter’s vowel, the phrase is really a polite contraction. A hint to his feelings may be gained from Arturo Schwarz’s remark about coition is since it depicts the “coming together” of art. But Duchamp is something more germane: the tearing of the picture plane. Schwarz writes: “Right in its center a Foell tear in the canvas is mended with safety pins. From a hole in the brush, securely fastened to the straw toward the spectator. The symbol is clear—it is a transparent coitus, while the three safety pins may refer to a clumsy attempt to exploit the inherent syntactical-freedom of the picture plane. The point is that what is placed on and sent in the picture plane is a device supporting the notion of coition. The safety pins reveal that between what is placed on and what it is: an object. In much painting (such as Rauschenberg’s) the inherent syntactical-freedom of what is placed on and what it is: an object. In much painting (such as Rauschenberg’s) is exploited to the nature-culture mediation is achieved through the agency of light or that source emanating from the apex of the Great Pyramid, spiritual illumination. The corkscrew refers to the “uncorking process” in The Large Glass. This allows us to capture the bouquet of a wine without sampling it. Analogously we read content into nonobjective art even though it is only there by implication. This latent content, a reminder of earlier art, is the “uncorking.” In Tu m’ve the corkscrew extends far outside its normal length, becoming a kind of curling layer of gas reaching out of the past.

Tu m’ve, o/c, with long brush attached, 27 & x 122”, 1918.
(Yale University Art Gallery.)
Duchamp refers to on occasion as a "shop window" or "ready-made" device supporting the notion of content in painting, Arturo Schwarz writes: "Right in its center a trompe l'oeil tear in the canvas is mended by three red safety pins. From a hole in the tear a bottle brush, securely fastened to the stretcher, projects into the tear. The symbolic meaning of this detail is clear - it is a transparent allusion to coitus, while the three safety pins that repair the tear may refer to a clumsy attempt to cancel out the consequences of the sexual intercourse."

Schwarz’s remark about coition is not unfounded since it depicts the "mingling together" producing a work of art. But Duchamp is implying something more germane: the tear announces destruction of the picture plane as an illusionary device supporting notion of content in painting. The safety pins reveal the painting for what it is: an object in much the same way painters (such as Rauschenberg and Johns) will exploit the inherent antitodal-formal ambiguity between what is placed on and what is represented in the picture plane.

A dirty tannish color and drab yellow are the background colors in *Tu m*. In alchemy these shades signify intellectual obtuseness and a lack of spiritual development. The top color switch on the sample plate is a bright lemon yellow, representing the highest degree of intellectual illumination.

Below the bottle brush is a glass pane. More than likely this is the picture plane which Duchamp refers to on occasion as a "shop window(s)". Projected on the four corners of the glass pane are four sets of black and red lines generated from the templates of the Standard Playing Cards. Red, as I have specified before, signifies sexual lust and unrefined character, a passion to conquer without understanding. Black, on the other hand, implies many things: in this case it may be a sign of termination or emphasis of Extended at right angles from these lines is a series of colored ribbons. These appear to be ordered in sequences, and quite possibly relate to the esoteric color groups found in the Tarot. Surrounding the multicolored strips is a concentric series of circles most likely representing infinity. Duchamp appears to be saying that many thousands of artists will continue to make abstract paintings by juxtaposing color relationships, and there is no reason why this activity cannot go on indefinitely — as semantically meaningless as it is.

This last interpretation is reinforced by the shadow of a hanging hat rack, a reference to an assisted ready-made prepared by Duchamp in 1917. The Hat Rack is rendered nonfunctional by being hung almost upside down. In such a position it becomes simply an object without reference to any context — just as a nonobjective painting is strictly an object assigned a context. On a Metallanguage level Duchamp restores meaning to the hat rack by simply titling it *Hat Rack*. In a note in the Green Box the artist describes the psychological mechanism by which colors are awarded significance in the mythic context of nonobjective art. For the Breeding of Colors:

- Mixture of flowers of color i.e.
- Each color still in its optical state
- Permutations of reds, of blues of greens or of gray heightened towards yellow red or of weaker maroons. The whole in scales. These permutations with physiological rebound can be neglected and extracted in an imprisonment for the fruit.
- Only, the fruit still has to avoid being eaten. It’s the dryness of "nuts and raisins" that you get in the ripe impertinent colors. (saturated colors.).

On one level this may refer to the significance of different color scales as they are used in transcendental magic. The heightening towards the primaries and maroon indicates some relation to the four Elements. More specific, though, are the artist’s allusions to the myriad color combinations that may be used to promote a sense of uniqueness — a most necessary feature in modernist art. Each, so to speak, generates its particular perfumed essence, the result of a cognitive mechanism at work. This mechanism may be the sophisticated memory of the artist, a kind of totemic system that allows each viewer to make free associations with countless past recollections. Duchamp implies that this is perfectly acceptable as long as the art lover avoids eating the fruit, that is, rationally understanding the entanglements of color.

In summing up, the concept of the "ready-made" is perfectly acceptable as long as the art is enjoyed for what it is, a ready-made picture plane as an illusionary device supporting notion of content in painting. Arturo Schwarz in *Modern Art in the United States* observes: "... the last ten years have seen a revival of interest in the mathematical and physical laws that govern the perception of color and other aesthetic qualities. This new approach to semiotics is an attempt to describe the language of art, to establish the presence of mutually dependent rules of transformation and structure. These findings do, however, raise a question about the nature of syntax. If it can be proved that the rules of transformation are independent of the rules of meaning, then the entire proposition of abstract painting is undermined by the very laws of language."

The churning of the abstract is a tangle in the Garden of Eden. Mythically the first procreation of art. It is the expression of the primitive nature of the artist's oneness and reliance on nature. The artist's atavistic nature, his inner animal strength, his decorative, animalistic nature, his strength as the primary force in the world. The artist is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world. He is the one who can create the most powerful force in the world.
Understanding the entire system of conceptual correspondences which is the mythic structure of art. Mythically the most repressed knowledge, just as the "dryness of nuts and raisins" refers to those unprofitable plants grown in the Garden of Eden that give the illusion of afflatus omnvm and relate to the quadrant of WATER. "Ripe improtant colors" become stronger reminders of art since they alone represent the phonological articulation of a single semantic.

In summing up the ideas that have been put forth in this article, I must apologize for the brevity of the arguments. An adequate summarization of the evidence necessary to understand the analyses put forth would take at least several chapters of a book. These findings do, however, suggest a radical new approach to semiotic studies. For instance they tend to demonstrate the centrality of sentence structure as a linguistic unit, supporting the contention in linguistics that language universals do exist. The notion of universals is based on the theory that underlying cognitive rules determine kernel sentence structure for all languages. Consequently the foundations of syntax, phonemics, and semantics are the same for all languages. To date most of the evidence for this stems from the phonological universals discovered by Roman Jakobson in the 1920s. During the last ten years there have been advances in the mathematical and some of the rules of transformational grammar to widely divergent languages. To my knowledge, however, little progress has been shown in defining rules of syntax completely free from dependencies upon semantic features. In spite of Chomsky's assertions, there is mounting evidence that the generation of unique sentences exists because of mutually dependent ("deep-deep structure") rules of syntactical and semantic manipulation. If it can be proved that a number of extra-linguistic semantic principles also have their origins in the organizational properties of sentence structure, this would go some way towards establishing the permanence of universals as multi-purpose neural mechanisms.

Above all, the discoveries of Duchamp and Levi-Strauss undeniably relate the origins of religion and magic to art. It gradually becomes apparent that within the wide latitudes of the Natural and Cultural, the Sacred and Profane, various strategies direct the rites of mediation. It is always the act of mediation (the semiotic unification of the conceptual and the physical) that gives psychological value to any object or subject matter. Sixty years ago Emile Durkheim realized the truth of this in his study of sacred objects: The curiosities are preserved in a sort of temple, upon whose threshold all noises from the profane life must cease; it is the domain of sacred things. On the contrary, the totemic animals and plants live in the profane world and are mixed up with the common everyday life. Since the number and importance of the interdictions which isolate a sacred thing, and keep it apart, correspond to the degree of sacredness with which it is invested, we arrive at the remarkable conclusion that the images of totemic beings are more sacred than the beings themselves. 

Duchamp was one of the first sociologists to sense that the sacred character of objects emanates from relations outside the objects themselves. Hence the world of art, like that of religion, encompasses a complete construct of cognitive relationships denying material importance. The association connected to an object, and not the object itself, defines its religious or esthetic value.

...when a sacred thing is subdivided, each of its parts remains equal to the thing itself. In other words, as far as religious thought is concerned, the part is equal to the whole: it has the same powers, the same efficacy.

In closing we must remember that Duchamp would have gained scant attention and no credit if he had proposed his theories in 1912; at most he might have succeeded in diverting art from its predestined course. Instead Duchamp established his case by selecting a great many trivial objects — "the junk of life" — and transforming these into some of the most seductive and enigmatic art of the 20th century. In the end we comprehend the essence of language-based illusions through the agency of revelation and the limitations of logic.

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14. Marcel Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors (1922).
18. Ibid., pp. 106-119.
21. Ibid., (no page number).
23. Ibid., p. 470.
24. Ibid., p. 471.