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is for **DUCHAMP** the **DEEP
DYED
DECEIVER**

A research exhibition by the Arsenale Institute for Politics of Representation

Marcel Duchamp was not enigmatic.

He articulated his theory of art with utmost clarity and consistency for more than half a century.

He believed that the spectator gives meaning to the artwork, while the artist is merely a “mediumistic being”, not cognizant of what his intuition brings forth. Significance is a societal yield. Authorship, accordingly, resides in reception.

The Arsenale Institute’s project takes this concept seriously, transforming the way Duchamp’s œuvre and legacy are understood.

That is why this inquiry examines Duchamp through evidence of how his works were disseminated, understood, and interpreted: publications, articles, and illustrations are juxtaposed with the pieces from his œuvre to which they refer. An exceptional collection of previously unknown sources is presented here alongside the most influential publications from his lifetime. Original artworks by Duchamp are shown merely as references, including the industrial prototype for the seminal readymade *Trébuchet* — the French term for a trap in chess — never seen before.

This approach reflects the artist’s conviction that meaning originates in the viewer’s judgment. As such, the presentation marks a paradigm shift in how the father of conceptual art is interpreted and displayed, setting it apart from institutional spectacles.

Developed over almost three decades of research, this project takes seriously Duchamp’s thought in his 1957 lecture *The Creative Act*, where he describes the work of art as constituted through a collusion between artist and spectator, with the latter serving as the work’s real author.

“All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”

The project features an intervention by the German artist Olaf Nicolai. Executed in neon lettering, it is based on a statement by Duchamp found in a recently discovered correspondence, which is on display as well. The phrase supports the project’s concept by focusing on Duchamp’s own words, offering insight into the trap he set for his audience.

The Arsenale Institute for the Politics of Representation, led by philosopher Wolfgang Scheppe, founded in 2006 with Lewis Baltz and Marco de Michelis, is an independent institution committed to researching the role of images in society.

The installation has been curated by Wolfgang Scheppe with Elena De Battista, Max Glader, Zoë Wismeth and Bastiaan van der Velden. It was realized in collaboration with Rita Fortin, Mariavittoria Chilovi, Carolina Gris, Marie Letz, Max Norman, Kees van den Meiracker, Masha Negura, Francesco Piccinonna.

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