

HELEN MOLESWORTH

DUCHAMP: BY HAND, EVEN



Marcel Duchamp
Feuille de Vigne Femelle
(Female Fig Leaf), 1950

During the 1950s, Duchamp made three curious objects. Never mind that he had abandoned making art as early as 1921, they exist nonetheless. Each object is the scale of the human hand, strangely inert and oddly disturbing. They are often referred to as the three erotic objects. *Female Fig Leaf* looks like the inverse of a woman's vulva; its sensuous forms slope up into a ridgelike lip, the inverse of the opening on a real body, though no less alluring and provocative. The interplay between the smooth and rough surfaces lends it a palpable tactility. The object's haptic nature is heightened by its phantasmatic quality – both the fantasy of its making and the potential of its use. Duchamp made two copies of *Female Fig Leaf*, one for himself and one for his dear old friend Man Ray. A sexy joke between two boyish friends. It was also a gift borne of economic generosity, as Duchamp was to grant Man Ray the right to make an edition of ten of the sculptures for sale.

Objet-Dard had its debut at the Rose Fried Gallery in New York in 1953, and was shown alongside *Female Fig Leaf*. *Objet-Dard* is simultaneously phallic and scatological, flaccid and abject. Despite the object's nuanced psychological address, there is a whiff of the schoolboy snicker about it as well. Made of galvanized plaster, colored a dingy metallic brown, it prompted Francis Naumann's remark that it appears to be a cast, "but cast from what?" Its title is similarly mutable; *dard* is French slang for penis as well as being a pun on the French *objet d'art*, indicating a slippage between sex and art as well as art and object. It too was reproduced, in an edition of eight. The *New York Times*'s Stuart Preston described it and *Female Fig Leaf* as "bizarre artifacts."² Who can blame him? Not quite sculpture, not quite objects, seemingly disconnected from Duchamp's other work on view, they must have been particularly hard to make sense of upon first viewing.

The last of the triumvirate is *Wedge of Chastity*. Inscribed "pour Teeny 16 Jan. 1954 Marcel," it was a wedding gift to Duchamp's bride, Teeny Matisse. Comprised of two pieces that fit snugly together, hand in glove, the wedge is fashioned of plaster and the base is made from a handful of the material used to make dental impressions. Until now the interior of the object had never been photographed (although it bears a strong resemblance to a photograph of *Female Fig Leaf* that appeared on the cover of André Breton's magazine, *Le Surréalisme même*).³ When the wedge is lifted, the rough edge gives way to a shocking pink interior that is an intensely intimate, loving, and erotic depiction of a pussy. Even the most personal of wedding presents was reproduced in an edition of eight.

Wedge of Chastity is a work for which touch is essential. Only through physical engagement with the object can the play between what is seen and unseen become evident. And even though there are no strictly defined anatomical parts, the dualistic nature of the work, its intense symbiosis, and its overwhelming implication of two bodies propose a particularly expansive version of the erotic. *Wedge of Chastity* offers an ineluctable mixture of the bodily and the nonbodily, a merging of two entities that nonetheless maintain their autonomy.



Marcel Duchamp
Objet-Dard (Dart-Object), 1951



right Marcel Duchamp
Coin de Chasteté (Wedge of Chastity), 1954

All in all, the three erotic objects instantiate what one art historian has called "the gap between what is presented and what is signified," inasmuch as in each sexuality, the body, and the strange reciprocity between bodies and objects is gestured toward but not demonstrated.⁴

The three erotic objects, and their subsequent editions, exert a strong appeal to our sense of touch. They employ a variety of nontraditional sculptural materials such as galvanized plaster and dental plastic. They explore the mold and casting as a form of sculptural production and reproduction. They establish a tabletop scale for sculpture – refusing both monumentality and the need for a base. And they constitute a field of play that is definitively erotic, harkening back to the explorations of eros and desire that figured so prominently in Duchamp's work of the teens and 1920s, most notably *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23). They were also exhibited quite a lot, both in the United States and in Europe, as the 1960s saw a rise in Duchamp exhibitions, and the three erotic objects were included in the most important of them.⁵ This means that the erotic objects and the readymades – Duchamp's two important forays into the realm of sculpture – often appeared side by side, and indeed Duchamp considered them to be equally worthy of display.

The reappearance of the readymades in the 1960s is far from self-evident. In 1913 Duchamp invented the readymade by conceiving of the commodity object as an engine for making sculpture. During the teens, the mechanics of this operation were largely comprised of choice, purchase, and display. In other words, Duchamp allowed his artistic process to mime the relations and logic of the commodity world. As he strolled through the markets of Paris and the along the streets of New York looking for commodities to transform into art, he rehearsed one of Charles Baudelaire's famous complaints against sculpture – that it "suffers because it too easily becomes indistinguishable from a luxury object."⁶ While one would be hard pressed to view the array of mundane and domestic objects chosen by Duchamp as luxury items (a hat rack, coat rack, bottle rack, and comb, for example), the problem of indistinguishability was acute, and, perhaps fittingly, most of the original readymades were lost, discarded, or simply went unnoticed. That is, until after World War II, when interest in Dada and Surrealism in general, and Duchamp in particular, became a hallmark of the postwar European and American art scene. As Hal Foster has argued, Duchamp becomes Duchampian only in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and in the blush of interest that accompanied his work the lost and discarded readymades – now known almost exclusively through photographs – were increasingly in demand.⁷

It is well documented, but not much discussed, that the Swedish curator Ulf Linde and the Italian art dealer Arturo Schwarz helped to meet this demand in the early 1960s by making handmade versions of the readymades.⁸ In 1960 Linde made copies of *Bicycle Wheel* and *Fresh Widow* for a gallery exhibition of Duchamp's work in Stockholm. It appears that, at first, Duchamp was unaware of these copies. At Linde's beckoning, Duchamp traveled to Stockholm in 1961, where he was presented with Linde's copies, both of which he graciously



Marcel Duchamp
Cover for "Le Surréalisme, même," 1956



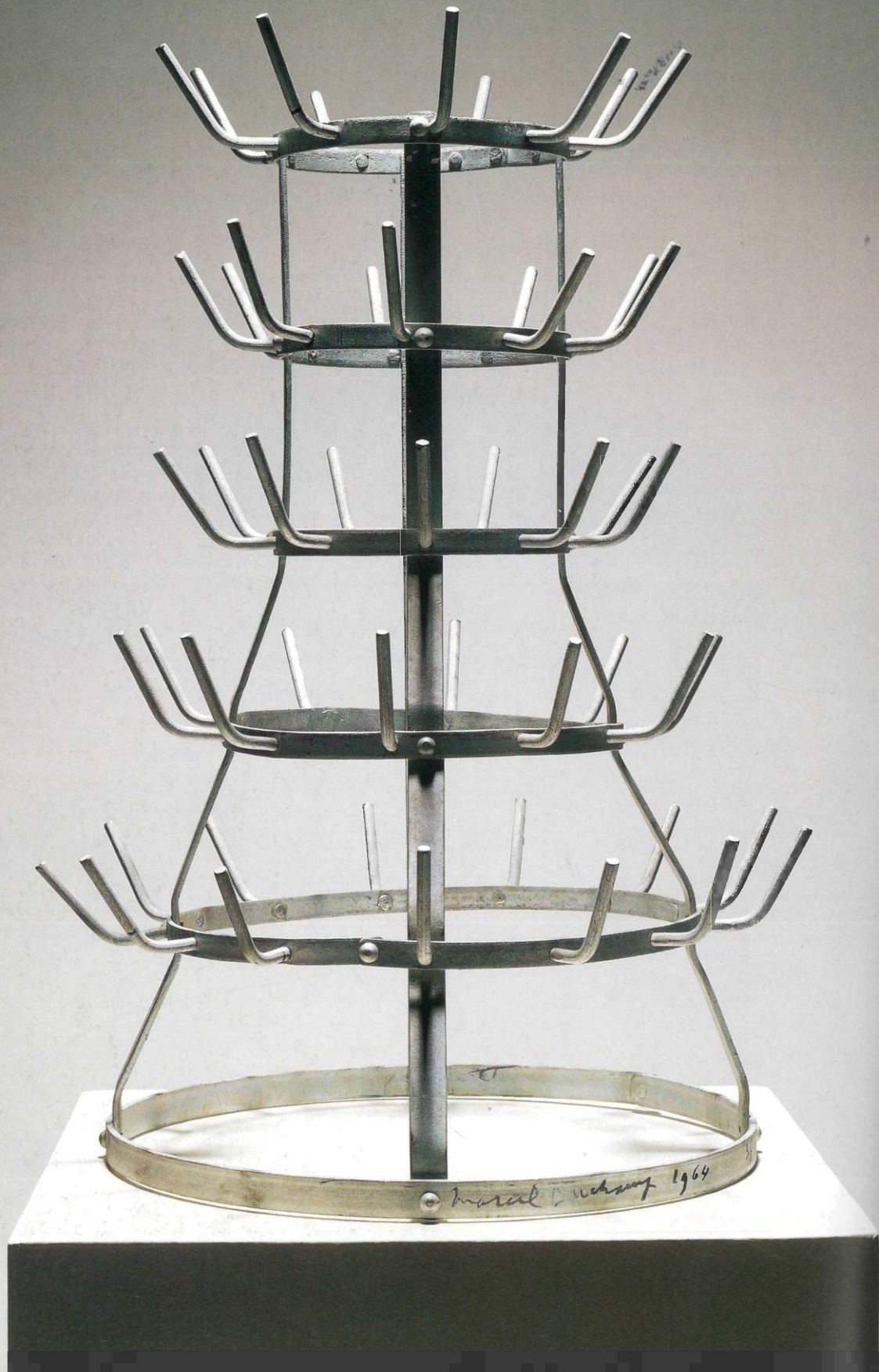
opposite: left Marcel Duchamp
**La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires,
 même** (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her
 Bachelors, Even), 1915–23. Replica made by
 Ulf Linde c. 1961

opposite: right Marcel Duchamp
**La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires,
 même** (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her
 Bachelors, Even), (The Large Glass), 1915–23

signed "copie conforme." Later, under the auspices of curator Pontus Hulten, the museum of modern art in Stockholm (the Moderna Museet) commissioned Linde to make a copy of *The Large Glass* as well as a complete set of readymades. This time Duchamp was aware of the project and requested that all the works be donated to the permanent collection of the museum. Working from photographs and the dimensions published in Robert Lebel's monograph, Linde fabricated some of the objects himself, some were produced by local craftspeople (*Paris Air*, for instance, was made by a local glassblower), and the Linde version of *Fountain* was purchased directly from a restaurant lavatory. The Linde replicas were to make two important public appearances. In 1963 Walter Hopps organized Duchamp's first retrospective exhibition at the Pasadena Museum. Four of Linde's readymades (*In Advance of a Broken Arm*, *Traveler's Folding Item*, *Paris Air*, and *Fresh Widow*) were on view, as was his replica of *The Large Glass*. This exhibition served as the first major introduction of Duchamp's work to American artists, and its catalogue clearly lists the readymade as Linde replicas: there was no hiding their replication.

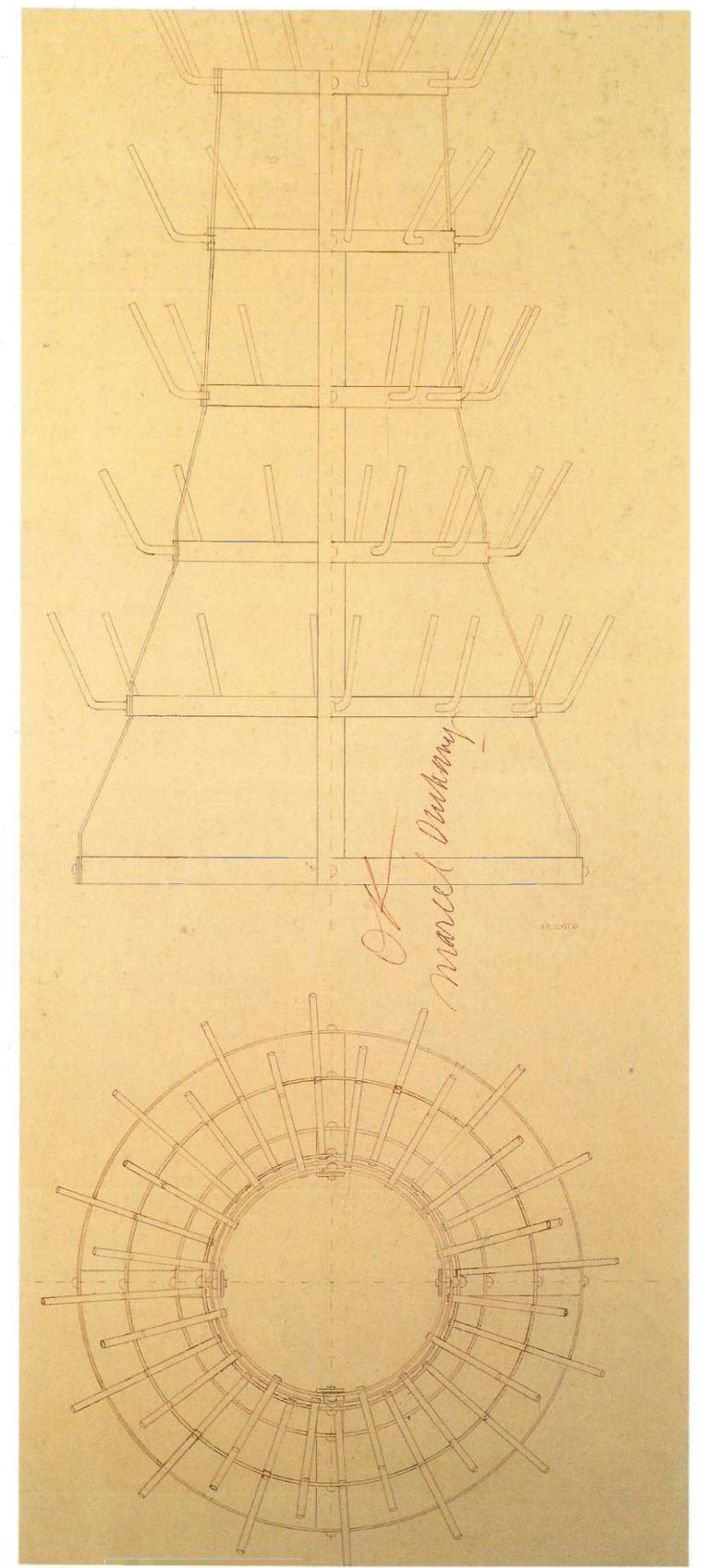
The second important public viewing of Linde's replicas was in Arturo Schwarz's Milan gallery in an exhibition held there in 1963, precisely the moment Schwarz himself was beginning to remake a set of the lost readymades. Schwarz had already established an intense interest in Duchamp as early as 1957, when he began to collect materials for what would become the definitive catalogue raisonné of Duchamp's oeuvre. While Schwarz was singularly obsessed with Duchamp, he was also interested in Dada and Surrealism more broadly, and the Galleria Schwarz in Milan was an important conduit of these ideas for the post-war community of Italian artists. The precise details of how the Schwarz edition came to pass are not exactly known. Schwarz claims that Duchamp wanted to bring all of his works together – a desire that was evident in the *Boîte-en-Valise* ("Box in a Valise") – and was dismayed that the readymades were no longer extant.⁹ Duchamp had already editioned the three erotic objects – indeed it was Schwarz who had issued *Objet-Dard* and *Wedge of Chastity*. In this regard, Duchamp's interest in casting and repetition was firmly in place. It was agreed that all the readymades would be editioned in groups of eight with two extra copies, one for Duchamp and one for Schwarz. Suffice it to say that the vast majority of people who have encountered a readymade in the second half of the twentieth century have seen one from the set Schwarz produced in 1964.

Unlike the Linde replicas, the Schwarz readymades were overseen by Duchamp at every turn, and accuracy was of the essence as Schwarz hired professional engineers to make blueprints of the readymades based on the photographs.¹⁰ Only *Fountain* was not produced solely by a craftsman. A mold was made by a ceramicist and given to an Italian plumbing manufacturer, where, one evening, the factory line of mass production was halted as twelve *Fountain* sculptures were made instead.¹¹ Schwarz subsequently hired professional craftsmen to make the objects – a glassblower for *Paris Air*, a welder for the *Bottle Rack*, a carpenter for the *Hat Rack*. The dominant art-historical reception of the readymade



right Marcel Duchamp
Plan du Porte-bouteilles (Plan for Bottle
 Dryer), 1964

left Marcel Duchamp
Porte-bouteilles (Bottle Dryer), 1914,
 5th version 1964



sees it as the agent that introduced the forces of mass production into the realm of art, yet this account too easily neglects the "handmade" wrinkle in the story. That Duchamp turned commodity production into a cottage industry, staffed by Swedish and Italian craftsmen, comes with all the requisite Duchampian irony. Yet if we look closely we might see the telltale evidence, traces of the handmade. *Bottle Rack* not only looks antiquated, but it lacks the polish of the assembly-line. *Paris Air*, originally made as a gift for Duchamp's New York patron Walter Arensberg, was an ampoule purchased from a Parisian pharmacy, broken and emptied, then filled with air and resealed. The 1964 *Paris Air*, by contrast, is seamless; there is no tear or break to suggest Duchamp's intervention or the abiding touch of friendship that suffuses the original object. And even the factory-produced *Fountain* prompted the following response from William Camfield, the art historian who has looked the most closely at all the versions of *Fountain*: "This replica seems more related to sculpture than to readymades, given its slight but perceptible modulations of surface which suggest its origin as handcrafted sculpture rather than an American assembly-line production."¹²

If the meaning of objects (aesthetic and otherwise) derives, in relatively equal measure, from their function and their production, then the handmade quality of the remade readymades, and Duchamp's explicit decision to have them refabricated in editions, seems wholly contradictory, certainly qualifying our sense of the "original" readymades. Given that Duchamp produced the three erotic sculptures of the 1950s by hand, it is possible they may offer some clues to the conundrum of the handmade readymades of the 1960s.

After Duchamp's death in 1968, it was revealed that more than merely making the erotic objects and the *Boîte-en-Valise*, he had also been at work, secretly, for nearly twenty years on the spectacular and mysterious *Etant donnés*. The work was donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art so that it could be permanently on view and seen in relation to the largest collection of works by Duchamp in the world, including, importantly, *The Large Glass*. In a room all its own, the viewer comes upon a set of wooden doors, which contain two peepholes just below an average sight line. Bending forward, ever so slightly, to peer through them, one is confronted with a startling *mise-en-scène*: behind the doors, and then through an opening in a brick wall, one sees the prone figure of a white woman. Her face is obscured, although a bolt of blonde hair is visible just above her shoulder. The body is naked and splayed across a twig-filled landscape. She holds a flickering gas lamp in her left hand. In the background one can see a waterfall, complete with a mechanical simulation of moving water. These attributes are contained within the full title of the work, *Given: 1. The Waterfall 2. The Illuminating Gas*.

The mystery of *Etant donnés* is evidenced by how little has been written about it.¹³ In the art-historical reception of Duchamp, it has largely been occluded by the invention of the readymades. Yet it looms large, and the relationship between it and the three erotic objects may ultimately reconfigure our sense of the handmade readymades of the 1960s. All three of the erotic objects bear

a strong relation to *Etant donnés*. *Objet-Dard* is a remainder from the process of breaking the mold for the woman's body in *Etant donnés*, specifically the part of the mold that supported an area under her breast. Similarly, *Female Fig Leaf* is cast from the figure's particularly mysterious genitals – which are not quite there, lacking in both pubic hair and proper placement. *Wedge of Chastity* shares an experiential dimension with *Etant donnés*. Obscure until seen, both *Wedge of Chastity* and *Etant donnés* splay open the female body, suggesting that desire and eros are the product of a gaze that is simultaneously scopophilic and haptic, voyeuristic and tactile.

Unlike *Etant donnés*, the three erotic objects are not fixed in space. They share a domestic scale, by which I mean that they all occupy the realm of things placed on top of tables and mantels, as opposed to floors and pedestals. Their modest scale gives them a migratory quality, which Duchamp acknowledged when discussing *Wedge of Chastity*: "We still have it on our table. We usually take it with us, like a wedding ring, no?"¹⁴ I find the quickness of this elision quite telling, to think that an object as curious and oblique as *Wedge of Chastity* could so easily be held in relation to a ready-made (or luxury) object like a wedding ring. And it is precisely the relation between the erotic objects and the readymades that I would like to try to articulate, especially given the fact that by the late 1950s editions of the erotic objects had already begun to circulate. Schwarz exhibited them in Milan, where they were almost certainly seen by Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni.¹⁵ Manzoni, in turn, showed *Female Fig Leaf* to Marcel Broodthaers; it was the first work by Duchamp he had seen.¹⁶ By 1960 it appears that Jasper Johns owned a version of all three objects. I say this to indicate that the reception of Duchamp comes through these objects as much as through the readymades. Importantly, it was only after these intimate and cast objects were reproduced, and had begun to circulate, that Duchamp authorized Arturo Schwarz to fabricate a set of the then mostly lost readymades.

But why not simply go out and purchase a new urinal, a new bottle rack? After all, Duchamp had done just that when he first arrived in New York after leaving the original *Bicycle Wheel* in Paris.¹⁷ Schwarz maintains that making the readymades by hand to the specifications of the photographs was a means to keep them looking as much like the originals as possible – the contemporaneous design of functional objects like hat racks and shovels had changed to such an extent that they apparently would no longer suffice. According to Schwarz, Duchamp "wanted a perfect reproduction of the original. The only way to do it perfectly was to do it by hand. There was no other way. How could he reproduce something that was manufactured over half a century before?"¹⁸ Duchamp never quite addressed the issue head-on, although he maintained that readymades were chosen with "visual indifference." When asked by an interviewer in 1967 how a readymade should be looked at, Duchamp responded: "Ultimately, it should not be looked at. Through our eyes we get the notion that it exists. But we don't look at it the way we look at a painting. The idea of contemplation disappears completely. One simply notes that it's a bottle rack, or that it was a bottle



above and right Marcel Duchamp
Etant donnés: 1, La Chute d'Eau, 2, Le Gaz
d'Eclairage (Given: 1, The Waterfall,
2, The Illuminating Gas), 1946-66



rack and has changed direction."¹⁹ But if that's the case, then why go to all the trouble of having them remade by hand? Of course Duchamp had been going to the trouble of reproducing his oeuvre for quite some time, as the *Boîte-en-Valise* will attest. And it seems to go almost without saying that he was an artist deeply interested in the problem of reproduction and repetition. But making readymades by hand? What's that about?

I think the answer to this question is many sided. There is a prosaic answer, fitting in that Duchamp was nothing if not pragmatic. During the 1950s, Duchamp spent a prodigious amount of time and energy ensuring that his work was gathered and deposited in the right museums. He did this not only for his own benefit but also to ensure fair financial remuneration for his friends. He was nothing if not careful and calculated and generous in this regard.²⁰ This generosity extended to his newfound family as well, which has led many to surmise that Duchamp agreed to the Schwarz edition as a way to attend to the welfare of his wife and her children. However assiduously Duchamp had avoided the increasing pressures of a commercial art market, such a critique needed to be held in relation to the lived reality of family.²¹

Duchamp was far too intelligent and ethical an artist simply to make a thing or a set of things for money alone. He was an artist with a definitive set of interests, one worked out over time and in various media. The historical proximity of the intimately scaled and handmade erotic sculptures and the 1964 handmade edition of the readymades indicates there are connections to be made between the erotics of the body and the allure of the commodity object and further that Duchamp's sculptural practice is shaped by the relays between such different stagings of desire. To my way of thinking, the reproductions of the erotic objects created a sense of permission, or a field of possibility, for the production of handmade readymades. Handmade readymades offer a model of repetition that is more analogous to erotic or bodily modes of repetition, more similar to, as well, the model of repetition offered by casting than the mass production of the assembly line. (It was no mere expedient that the body of the woman in *Etant donnés* was made from a cast.) The erotic casts and the crafted readymades continue to maintain a difference, and a productive and structuring tension, between the forces of production that make commodities and the forces that make art. Both the handmade readymades and the erotic objects establish strong links between eros and objects. The mass-produced readymades of the teens offer the problem of reproduction and manufacture – the problem of the then relatively nascent assembly line – while the readymades of the 1960s offer us the problem of repetition and desire of and for lost objects, the quandary of how we negotiate difference (and hence our desire) in the field of overwhelming sameness and calcification.

I want to return to the temporal proximity of these two sets of objects. If the readymades were a conundrum, objects that resided in an uneasy place of legibility, inasmuch as they could not be regarded as *art* by those who first encountered them, then the cast objects are memory molds, fossils of psychic

states. *Objet-Dard* is a remnant of a work of art – or, better yet, of the process of making a work of art. *Female Fig Leaf* is the memory of a body – albeit a fictional one. Both are also images of absence. *Objet-Dard* marks out the space underneath or around the breast of the figure in *Etant donnés*. *Female Fig Leaf* offers us the negative space of the figure's pudendum. The last of the triumvirate, *Wedge of Chastity*, memorializes the ineffable quality of the erotic encounter, and as such it offers the fantasy of each piece filling the other's void. *Wedge of Chastity* also functions as a mnemonic for intimacy and fidelity: "like a wedding ring." Perhaps Duchamp's desire to have *Wedge of Chastity* function "like a wedding ring" was a desire for it to be read along standard social conventions, for it to be legible, as well as portable.²² One problem with the original readymades was that their legibility, their ability to be construed or understood as art, was compromised with every move – from Paris to New York, from the halls of the Independents Exhibition to Alfred Stieglitz's studio – in each instance they were discarded or misplaced, no longer available to perform the role of art. The irony here is pronounced, in that one of the foremost roles of art is to make things visible. It gives public form to thoughts and feelings, to ideas and bodies, to history and memory. Among the most important things the readymade did, and does, is to bestow this legibility upon the commodity – to its eccentricities and vagaries – to the deep peculiarity of objects, to the ways in which commodities trip us up or act as a trap, or precede us.

One way readymades render the commodity legible is in part by making the body legible. Bodies become legible in their encounters with readymades because they are either called into humorous action (go ahead, hang up your hat) or stymied by their inability to use a previously functional thing (the problem of an inverted urinal).²³ As we trip over *Trébuchet* in Duchamp's studio, or spin the *Bicycle Wheel*, or puzzle over what to do with *In Advance of a Broken Arm*, Duchamp's readymades of the teens set into motion an intense relay between bodies and things – each serving to make the other visible. It is no mistake that the little girl of *Apolinère Enameled* is painting her bedpost, marking it so that both she and it can be seen. In turn, however, no matter how newly animated bodies might have become in the face of the readymades as installed in Duchamp's studio (little machines for slapstick), the objects themselves were routinely thrown away, forgotten, or destroyed; the readymades were commodities that ceased to be legible, either as art or even as a commodity worth saving. In many ways, the readymades don't become truly visible until after the war, when people want to include them in exhibitions, and when Duchamp allows other people (like Sidney Janis) to purchase them for him. Yet it is precisely during *this* period that Duchamp began to make his erotic sculptures by hand, and when he was involved, in secret, with the beginnings of *Etant donnés*. And it was during this time that he began to imagine an edition of readymades made by hand, to the exact – or as exact as possible – specifications of the originals. And by making them by hand, they became legible as art – finally. No one will ever lose or misplace or discard or destroy a 1964 handmade readymade. They have

migrated off the floor, they have come down from the ceiling and sit properly on pedestals – like art, and as such they are as legible as a wedding ring.

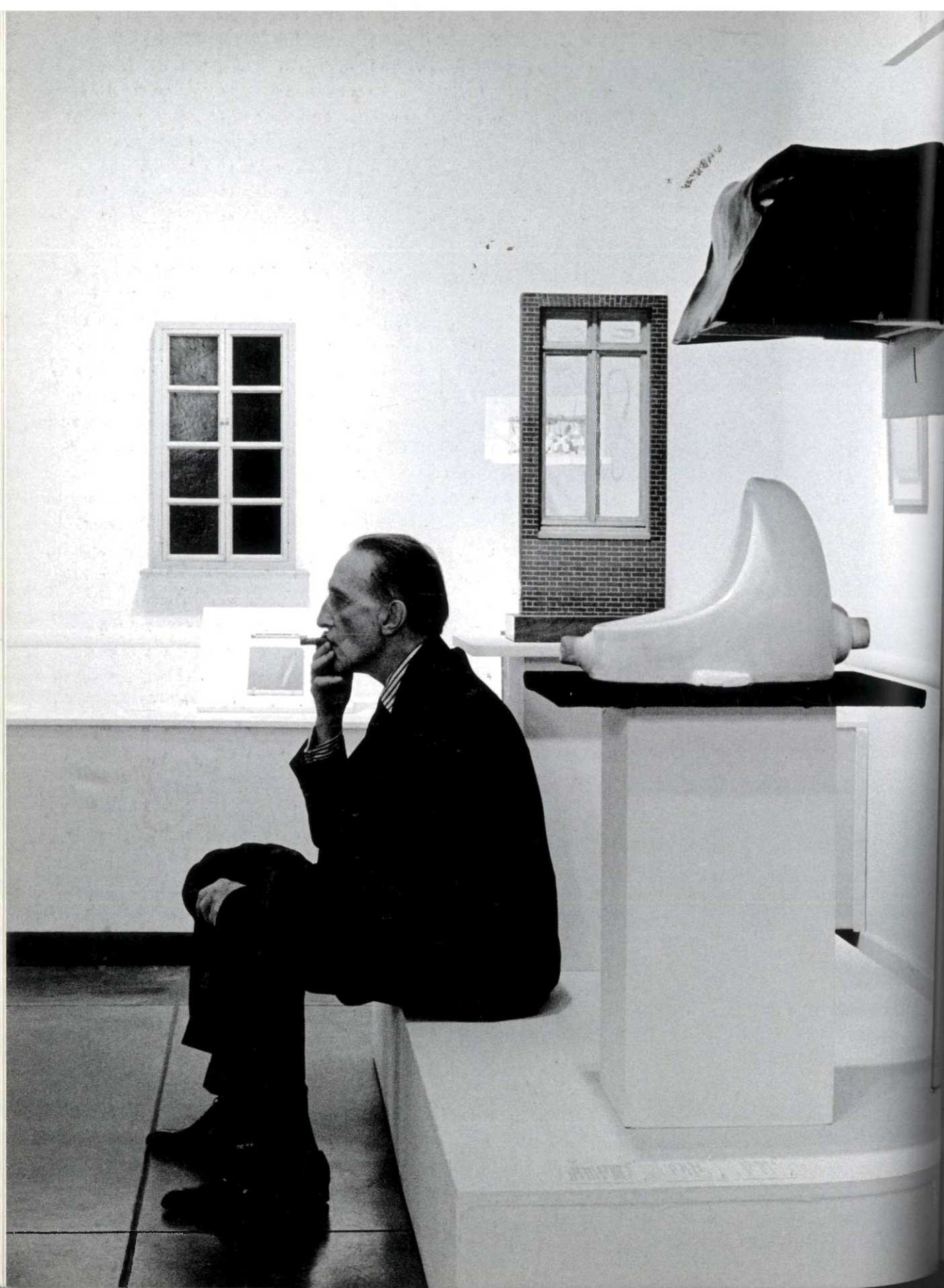
There is one other intermediary step. When Duchamp "installed" the first miniature replicas of the readymades in the *Boîte-en-Valise*, he positioned them in league with *The Large Glass* – where they hang like a vertical predella explicating, and being explicated by in turn, the stalled machine of desire that is *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. (This installation was staged again by curator Walter Hopps in the 1963 Pasadena exhibition of Duchamp's work. It is also the installation of the Linde replicas at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.) This pointed co-presentation is a way that Duchamp explored the relationships between the readymades and *The Large Glass* – between a set of objects that call the body into new ways of being and that exist at a liminal threshold between the commodity and something else – a readymade (if not a full-blown art object) and the kind of transformative but stymied erotic encounter imaged by *The Large Glass*. In other words, it was a way of talking about the effect of things on the body and the bodiliness of things.

This installation of the readymades helps to show us something about the corporeality of art and the potential reciprocity between the eroticism of the body and the sensuality of objects – art and otherwise. Here the commodity is shown to be a profoundly psychic object with erotic dimensions, as the readymades mirror the sexual division and frustration of *The Large Glass* – with *Paris Air* as an archetypal sinuous female form; *Traveler's Folding Item* as a simultaneous chaste protector and striptease waiting to happen; and finally *Fountain*, now turned upright – as if to offer at least some form of male release. Here, then, are the readymades presented as erotic objects. According to Walter Hopps, Duchamp used to call the readymades "my little pick-ups," a phrase that cannot refer only to his activity of shopping for them.²⁴ And just as there are three migratory commodities held in relation to *The Large Glass*, so too the three erotic objects are three clues to the as-yet-unveiled *Etant donnés*, snapshots of a picture not yet seen. If the 1964 set of readymades is the past reincarnated, then the three erotic objects are (or were) artifacts of the future.

Duchamp repeatedly stated that one aim of the readymade was to be antiretinal; indeed this has become an art-historical truism. And while I take Duchamp at his word, that the readymades are not necessarily about the visual as such, I don't think he ever meant for them to be anticorporeal. Rather, Duchamp's claims for the antiretinal can here be seen as having more to do with bodily modes of apprehension, memory, and legibility than ideas about art in the service of the mind. This is a way of looking at Duchamp as a purveyor of object relations that are in keeping with those of British psychoanalysts Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott. Kleinian object relations begin with the infant at her mother's breast. The breast stands alone, distinct and separate from the mother. It is the breast that is the satisfier of needs, creator of dependence. The child's fantasy life is formed around feelings toward the breast that are simultaneously loving and aggressive. The breast is an object that must be assimilated into the



Marcel Duchamp
Boîte-en-Valise (The Box in a Valise),
1935–41



Alvin Wasser
Marcel Duchamp in profile and Installation
of Ready-mades for the Marcel Duchamp
Museum, Pasadena, 1963

infant as well as rejected. In this model, the root of object relations is the child's struggle to understand the nature and existence of the boundaries between inside and outside, between "me" and "not me." This psychic and physical play between interior and exterior creates an intense cathexis onto objects, as objects come to stand for persons and parts come to stand for wholes.

Often the child wishes to destroy the breast, particularly through the act of incorporation. Fantasies emerge in which the breast is devoured, absorbed into the child, which subsequently ignite equally strong fantasies around its expulsion. For Klein, these fantasies of destruction inevitably lead to feelings of guilt, provoking ensuing desires for reparation. Far from them being pathological, Klein sees "these conflicting feelings, together with the emotional and intellectual growth of the child, which enable him to find other objects of interest and pleasure result in the capacity to transfer love, replacing the first loved person by other people and things."²⁵ According to Klein, the child's navigation of its relation to the breast as a part object is constitutive of fantasy, of creativity, and even of love and emotion itself. The subject only comes into being through and with a relation to the world of objects – both real and phantasmatic.

It is tempting to see the three erotic objects of Duchamp as Kleinian part objects *par excellence*. All are fragmentary in relation to the "wholeness" of both *Etant donnés* and the marriage of two fully elaborated adults. They share an intense bodiliness that renders their fragmentary nature all the more psychically and physically charged. They are also residual products of a much larger space of fantasy – *Etant donnés* – a space that is consummately erotic and aggressive, a space in which the viewer is both lured to and repelled from. What is of interest, however, is the intensity of the abstraction of these objects, suggesting that Duchamp continued to be interested in the ways in which three-dimensional representations of love and eros mobilize the space of the visual, the tactile, and fantasy in ways that rhyme with the psychic processes of the ego. That he would quickly edition them, reproduce them, or, perhaps more precisely, *repeat* them intimates that there is no closure, no complete working through, no act of reparation that finalizes our pendulum swings from love to destruction; there are only countless small gestures and acts of reworkings.

If the replication of the erotic objects did indeed create a sense of permission for the 1964 readymades, then the terms of psychic engagement do not appear to be the same. Where the erotic objects are Kleinian part objects, the readymades are Winnicottian transitional objects. For Winnicott, the subject's relation to the object world is more readily demonstrable. As infants develop the capacity for recognizing objects as "not me," as they learn the various distinctions of inside and outside, they begin to constitute creative relationships to objects and phenomena. Such objects emerge as the mother adapts less and less to the infant's demands (this is the classic "good-enough mother" that predominates in Winnicott); importantly, the mother withdraws according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure (a failure I will to return to). Objects and phenomena enter into this growing space between the mother and child, and Winnicott

referred to these as "transitional objects." Distinctly unlike part objects, transitional objects do not reside largely in the fantasy life of the child but rather are actual objects – blankets, dolls – that function as psychic talismans – aids for easing anxiety, helping the child to sleep. Such objects are nothing if not deeply familiar. Indeed, they lack the intensity of the part object largely because they are not born of, or consigned to, the space of fantasy. Quite the opposite, the transitional object is:

Gradually allowed to be decathected, so that in the course of the years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. By this I mean, in health the transitional object does not "go inside" nor does the feeling necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between "inner psychic reality" and "the external world as perceived by two persons in common," that is to say over the whole cultural field.²⁶

The readymades are many things, but it seems they are also transitional objects of a sort. In their first iteration, they allowed Duchamp to move from painting to not-painting or from painting to not-art or from painting to object. (I prefer not to calcify this move; a lot is in limbo for Duchamp in the teens and 1920s.) Hence, these are the readymades that can be lost, misplaced, "de-cathected," and, far from such losses being mourned, they are instead "spread out over the whole intermediary territory" (which in this instance means their photographic reproductions, especially in the *Boîte-en-Valise*, as well as their belated reception as "foundational" for postmodernism).

Winnicott further argues that transitional objects do not have symbolic value; they possess *actual* value. In this scenario, a "blankie" is not symbolic of the lost breast (it is emphatically not a part object), it is a blankie, an object whose very actuality endows it with a kind of agency. Such a sense of the "realness" of the thing means that the term transitional object "gives room for the process of becoming able to accept the difference between difference and similarity."²⁷ If the readymades are transitional objects, then their actuality, their status as object *and* sculpture, seems particularly important – both a bottle rack and a sculpture – not a bottle rack symbolic of a sculpture or necessarily symbolic of art as a commodity. But rather they are objects in the process of accepting "the difference between difference and similarity." If the readymades of the teens and 1920s fail, inasmuch as they can never quite be assimilated into the field of art proper, then the readymades of the 1960s are "good enough" readymades, objects that accept the failure of the first go-around and deploy instead the strategy of the handmade as a way to ensure that the objects – part object, part sculpture – continue to have a kind of actuality, that they don't become "symbolic" of something else, that they continue not to be mourned, but rather to be comfortably (visually) neglected, thrown into the healthy limbo that is the "external world as perceived by two persons in common."

But it is the readymades of the teens that are the true transitional objects. To call the 1964 set of readymades "good enough" is not quite to address the problem of what kind of object they actually are. It is to dodge the bullet, once more, on saying why it is that they needed to be made by hand. For many, the idea of handmade readymades is a capitulation to a kind of fetishism of a lost original, an object that erases the difference between past and present, between loss and presence. In such a reading, the handmade readymades are nothing if not cynical. And yet, as ironic as the turn of events might be, I don't, in the end, think it is cynicism that motivated Duchamp to approve a set of handmade readymades. The 1964 readymades are sculptural and, as such, they make it clear that the readymades of the teens were precisely *not* sculpture. Just as the 1964 edition makes it clear that the readymades of the teens were not sculpture (that is, not legible as art), they also are a frank acknowledgment that the readymades of the teens are no longer extant, that they are, for the most part, lost objects. By having the original mass-produced and purchased readymades made by hand, Duchamp is actually insisting upon their identity as lost. Even though Duchamp deputized Sidney Janis to purchase a new urinal for his exhibition *Challenge and Defy* in 1950 and signed a *Bottle Rack* purchased by Robert Rauschenberg in 1960, it clearly wasn't satisfactory. To establish them as so readily available in the 1950s must have felt odd, for the readymades were never *found* objects in the sense of André Breton's *objet trouvé*. And it appears, although Duchamp experimented with the idea, they could not be reconstituted as found objects after the fact. Rather, the 1964 set of readymades firmly establishes the identity of the original readymades as *lost*, as though being nonlegible in the first instance had come to constitute their meaning. They were transitional objects, de-cathected, unrecognized, and gradually left behind; such objects are not, then, simply found by others, but rather exist in the realm of memory and come to constitute one's sense of embodiment. So too it is worth noting that a transitional object is not open to substitution as such; every mother knows one doesn't "replace" a fraying blankie with a new one. (This may be why when a precious object is lost or broken in adulthood its replacement with an exact replica often doesn't do the trick; it's not the point in the end.) In this regard, the 1964 readymades, by establishing their radical difference from the readymades of the teens, bring us back to Winnicott's sense that these are objects that help us to understand "the difference between difference and similarity" – the difference between art and not-art, between transitional and lost objects, between objects and sculpture, and all the permutations of the two.

Two sets of objects, each forming a constellation around another: the readymades framing the inscrutable screen of desire that is *The Large Glass* and the erotic objects orbiting around the massive spatialization of fantasy that is *Étant donnés*. Two sets of objects, each with its own model of repetition and strategy for reproduction. The erotic objects offer us repetitions of a bodily and psychic nature produced by the reproductive technique of casting, a process

redolent with metaphors for memory and loss. The readymades of 1964 seem to be structured by the repetitions of transition and transformation, produced by skilled craftsmen, all by hand, except *Fountain*. And their handmadeness points, ironically, to a certain kind of actuality of their objectness, no longer one commodity object plucked from an endless stream and asked to stand in for all the others, but a thing, made, limited, rare, serving the purposes of art, even.

Duchamp doesn't offer us *The Large Glass* and *Etant donnés* as static objects to be apprehended (or puzzled over) visually. Rather, their accompanying set of objects imply that when parts are taken for whole, objects are apprehended through a wide range of bodily modes that often supersede the visual. And just as the space of fantasy can evoke the most powerful of physical gestalts, so too objects often bear the brunt of an intense cathexis, one typically manifested in a demonstrably bodily and tactile fashion. In each instance, Duchamp's works propose that there is no adequate way to stage the problems of desire and repetition without recourse to a tactile relationship with the object world, and that it is precisely because our psychic lives become intricately bound up in things (whether commodities or art) that sculpture and its repetitions offer one of the most charged avenues into untying the knot of eroticism, repetition, and commodities that governs our daily lives.

An earlier version of this text, entitled "Eros and the Readymade," can be found in *The Lure of the Object*, ed. Stephen Melville (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2005).

NOTES

1 Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1999; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 181.

2 As quoted in *ibid.*, 181.

3 I was able to view the interior of *Wedge of Chastity* at the Marcel Duchamp Archive at Villiers-sous-Grez, December 19, 2003. The interior has been photographed for the first time for this catalogue.

4 Dawn Ades, Neil Cox, and David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 184.

5 There was the aforementioned gallery exhibition at Rose Fried Gallery in 1953. In the early 1960s things really heated up with retrospective exhibitions held at the Pasadena Museum in 1963 and at the Galleria Schwarz in Milan in 1964. *Omaggio a Marcel Duchamp*, the Schwarz exhibition, subsequently traveled to Bern, London, The Hague, Eindhoven, and Hannover. In New York, the Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery held a retrospective exhibition in 1965, as did the Tate Gallery in London in 1966.

6 As quoted in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 63.

7 On the belatedness of the reception of Duchamp, see Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo Avant-Garde?" in Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*.

8 The two notable exceptions are William Camfield's *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, 1989) and David Joselit's unpublished lecture, "The Belated Career of the Readymade."

9 Letter from Schwarz to William Camfield, cited in Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain*, 91–92.

10 Ulf Linde asserts that the blueprints were actually made from his replicas. Conversation with the author, April 19, 2004, Stockholm.

11 This information is based on a conversation between the author and Schwarz, December 16, 2003, Milan. Memory is mutable, however, so in Calvin Tomkins's biography of Duchamp he states that only a ceramicist was involved. See *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 427. In addition to the edition of eight, plus the two – one for Duchamp and one for Schwarz – two additional copies of *Fountain* were made for exhibition purposes. According to William Camfield, they "do not bear Duchamp's signature or the metal plaque found on the edition of ten." Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain*, 93.

12 Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain*, 94.

13 The notable exceptions are Jean-François Lyotard, *Duchamp's Transformers: A Book* (Venice, Calif.: Lapis Press, 1990), and Molly Nesbit, "Marcel Duchamp: *Etant Donnés*," *Artforum International* 32 (September 1993): 158–59.

14 Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 88.

15 There is a photograph of Fontana and Duchamp at a Schwarz gallery opening, and Manzoni's knowledge of Duchamp's work is well documented.

16 On the relations between Broodthaers and Manzoni, see Rachel Haidu, "Marcel Broodthaers, 1963–1972, or The Absence of Work" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2003).

17 When Duchamp moved to New York from Paris in 1915, he left the *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) behind in his Paris studio. In 1951 he remade the work with a wheel and fork that Sidney Janis brought back from Paris for an exhibition entitled "Climax in Twentieth-Century Art, 1913," held at the Sidney Janis Gallery.

18 Conversation with the author, December 16, 2003, Milan.

19 "Marcel Duchamp Talking about Readymades: Interview by Philippe Collin, Galerie Givaudan, Paris, 21 June, 1967," in *Marcel Duchamp*, exh. cat., Museum Jean Tinguely Basel (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 38.

20 A major instance of this generosity can be seen in Duchamp's correspondence with Henry Pierre Roche regarding the possible sale of works of Duchamp owned by Roche that were wanted by American collectors. See *Affectionately, Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, trans. Jill Taylor (Ghent: Ludion Press, 2000), 310–24.

21 This argument can be found in Calvin Tomkins's biography. Curator Walter Hopps told me this in conversation, as did art historian Molly Nesbit.

22 On notions of transportability and Duchamp, see T. J. Demos, "Duchamp Homeless? The Avant-Garde and Post-Nationalism" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2000).

23 On the physicality of the readymades, see Helen Molesworth, "Slapstick and Laziness: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades," *Art Journal* (January 1999): 50–61.

24 Conversation with Walter Hopps, April 2, 2004, Houston.

25 Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," in *Love, Hate, and Reparation*, two lectures by Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), 91.

26 D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 5.

27 *Ibid.*, 6.