



# A Free Course on the History of Western Art

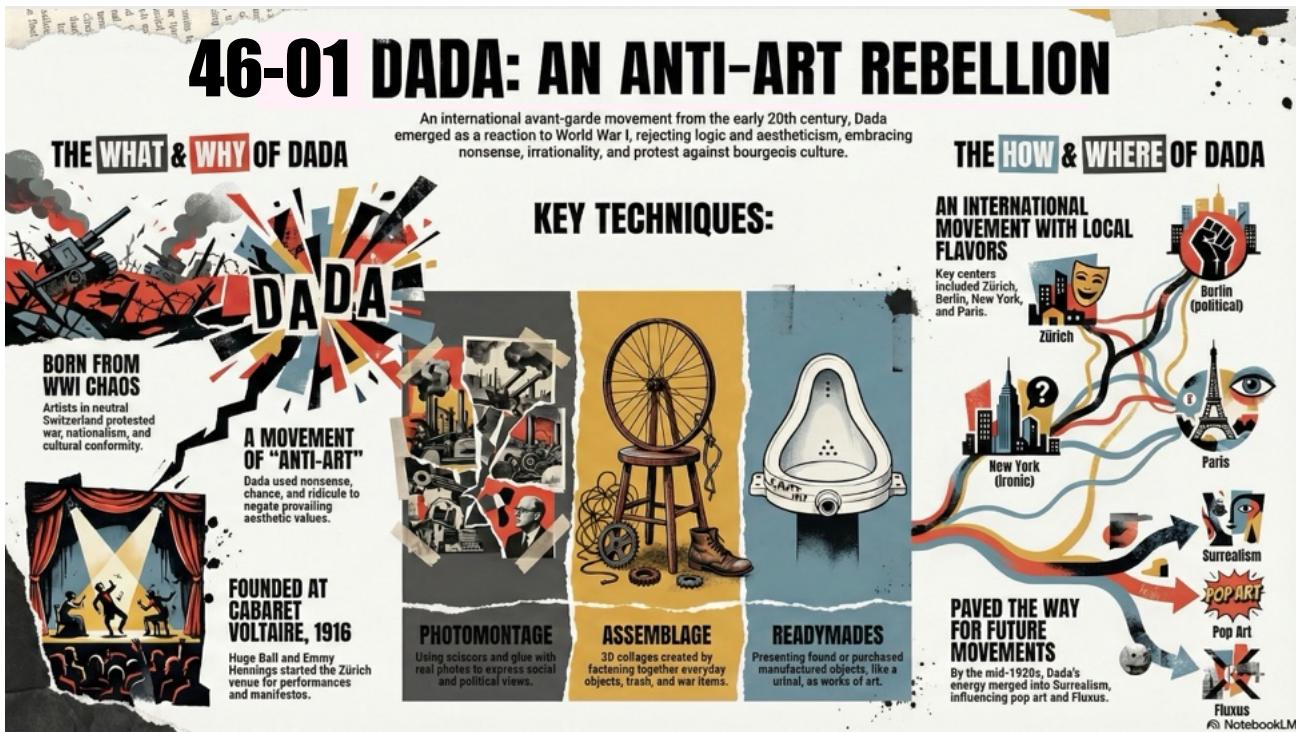
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- Welcome. This is one of over 200 talks on the history of Western Art. I have arranged the talks chronologically starting with cave art through to art produced in the last few years.

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- This is Section 46 on Dada an international art movement of the early 20th century. Born out of the chaos of World War I, it was an anti-art movement that started in a cabaret in Switzerland. They used photomontage, assemblage and readymades to make their point and Dada centres sprung up in Zurich, Paris, Berlin and New York. It influenced future art movements such as Surrealism, Pop Art and the Fluxus Group.

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Hugo Ball (1886-1927), Karawane (Sound Poem Performance), 1916, Performance Documentation, Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich

## Dada Keynote Presenter Notes

### Slide 1

Hugo Ball (1886-1927), Karawane (Sound Poem Performance), 1916, Performance Documentation, Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich

- Dada exploded into existence in February 1916 at **Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich**. **Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings** founded the cabaret in neutral Switzerland during World War I. Other founding members included Marcel Janco, Richard Huelsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Jean Arp. The movement framed itself as **protest against war**, nationalism, and cultural conformity, adopting strategies of **nonsense, chance, and ridicule**.
- Let me play you this video.
- Ball read his First Dadaist Manifesto at the first public Dada soirée on 14 July 1916. He wrote in his diary that the cabaret magazine would bear the name Dada. The word itself was meaningless, some say it was picked out of a dictionary at random.
- Karawane represents Ball's sound poetry experiments. These poems emphasised nonsense, refusing rather than reinforcing meaning. Ball performed wearing an enormous cardboard costume constructed like a bishop's vestments. He couldn't walk and had to be carried on stage. The poem began "gadji beri bimba glandridi lauli lonni cadori." Pure sound liberated from language's constraints.
- **Ball** felt Dada developed in wrong direction and **left the movement by 1917**.

His initial euphoria gave way to incomprehension at what he described as **increasing nonsense** of his Dada colleagues. Yet his sound poems influenced concrete poetry and performance art for decades.

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Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913, 126.5 cm height, Multiple versions, Museum of Modern Art New York (1951 version)

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913, 126.5 cm height, Multiple versions, Museum of Modern Art New York (1951 version)

- **A bicycle wheel mounted upside down on a wooden kitchen stool.** The wheel spins freely. He placed this assemblage in his Paris studio apartment. It was **the first "readymade" sculpture**, though he did not use that term until 1915. He made it simply for his own amusement.
- He later described watching it spin as **hypnotic, like watching flames in a fireplace**. The movement provided visual pleasure without aesthetic pretension. When he moved studios, he discarded it. The original no longer exists. All surviving versions are later reconstructions authorised by him.
- In 1913, he was living at 23 rue Saint-Hippolyte in Paris. His income remained minimal from library work. He spent more time with intellectuals than painters. The artist **Francis Picabia** became a close friend. They shared an interest in machines and anti-art gestures. Together they attended performances by Raymond Roussel, whose absurdist theatre influenced them both.
- This work emerged from **boredom with "retinal art"**—art that pleased only the eye. He wanted **art to serve the mind** instead. The bicycle wheel required **no skill to make**, just the idea to combine two manufactured objects. This challenged five centuries of artistic tradition based on craft and originality.
- He was also experimenting with motion studies and optical effects. He photographed himself and others in sequential movements. The spinning wheel continued his investigation into time, motion and perception. However, unlike

his paintings, this required no brushwork whatsoever. The factory had done the work.

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Marcel Duchamp *Fountain*, 1917, photograph by Alfred Stieglitz at 291 art gallery following the 1917 Society of Independent Artists exhibit, with the entry tag visible. The backdrop is *The Warriors* by Marsden Hartley

Marcel Duchamp *Fountain*, 1917, photograph by Alfred Stieglitz at 291 art gallery following the 1917 Society of Independent Artists exhibit, with the entry tag visible. The backdrop is *The Warriors* by Marsden Hartley

- This is the work that has been described by a group of **art historians and critics** as the **most important work** of art of the twentieth century. That is because it raises profound questions about the nature of art. But let us look at the circumstances.
- In **April 1917**, Duchamp **submitted this ordinary piece of plumbing** for inaugural exhibition of **Society of Independent Artists at Grand Central Palace in New York**. He bought his urinal from New York showroom of **J.L. Mott Iron Works**. He signed and dated it **R. Mutt 1917** and had it submitted to exhibition.
- The Society's directors voted to reject it. They refused it despite **a rule that the all works would be accepted**. Duchamp was on the board of directors and when it was rejected he resigned along with the Chairman, collector **Walter Arnsberg**. No one on the board knew the work had been submitted by him. A few days later, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz photographed *Fountain* displayed on a pedestal in front of a painting by Marsden Hartley.
- Duchamp wrote to his sister Suzanne on 11 April 1917: "**One of my female friends under masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, sent in porcelain urinal as sculpture.**" This letter sparked theories that **Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven** actually created the work but Duchamp denied any co-authorship.

- The original **Fountain** was **soon lost or destroyed**. The best guess is Stieglitz threw it out as rubbish. Altogether **fifteen authorised replicas** were issued later.

## NOTES

- In a 2004 survey of 500 influential British art figures, Fountain was voted most important artwork of twentieth century.

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Jean Arp (1886-1966), *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916-17, 48.5 × 34.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Jean Arp (1886-1966), *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916-17, 48.5 × 34.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

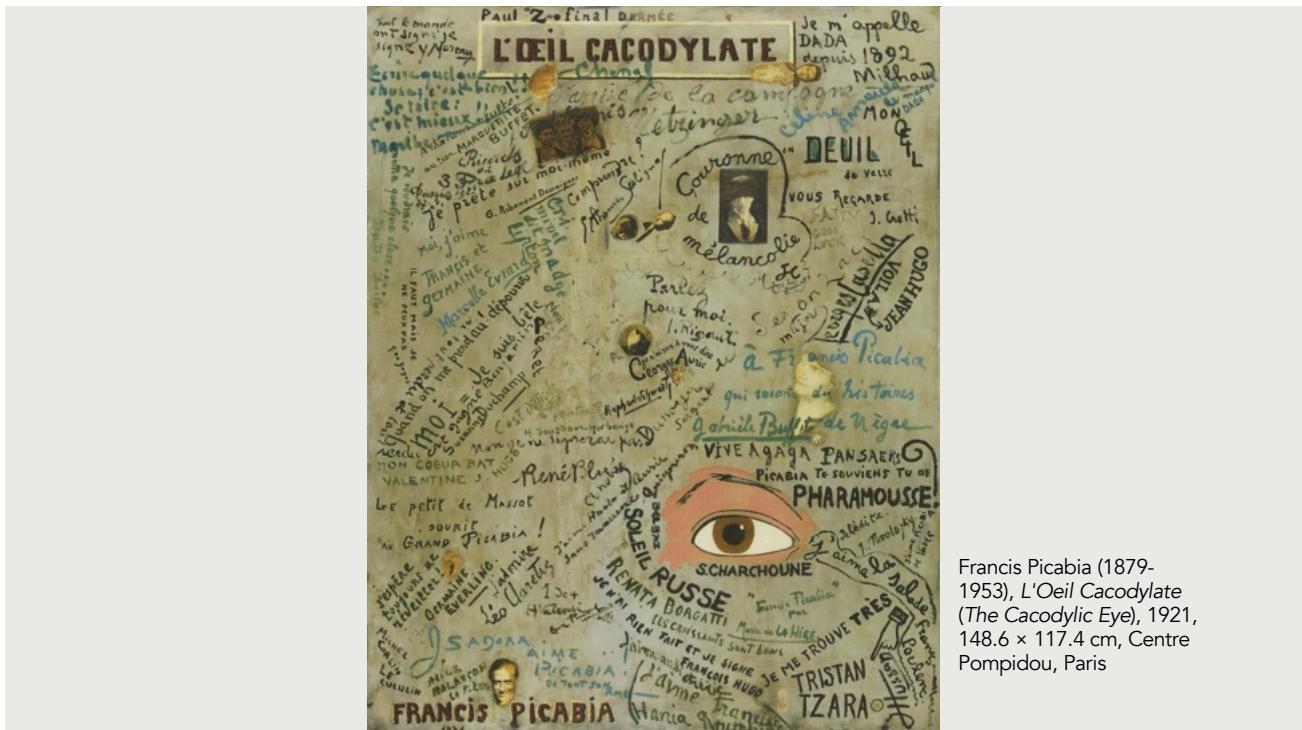
- Arp pioneered use of **chance** in art creation. This collage was allegedly created by **tearing paper and letting pieces fall randomly** onto backing. Where they landed determined composition. The method **rejected artistic control** and embraced accident as creative force.
- Born in Strasbourg, Arp moved between French and German identities. He studied at **Weimar School of Applied Arts** and **Académie Julian in Paris**. Met **Kandinsky** in Munich in 1912. By 1915, he'd fled to neutral Switzerland to escape war.
- At **Cabaret Voltaire**, Arp performed **simultaneous poetry** with other Dadaists. These involved multiple people reading poems in different languages with contrasting tonalities and rhythms at once. The cacophony embodied Dada's assault on rational discourse.
- The chance method appeared revolutionary but wasn't entirely random. Arp arranged squares with careful attention to visual balance. The work balances chaos with order. Its torn edges and overlapping placement suggest spontaneity whilst revealing deliberate aesthetic choices. This tension between control and chance became central to his artistic philosophy.

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Francis Picabia (1879-1953), *L'Oeil Cacodylate* (*The Cacodylic Eye*), 1921, 148.6 x 117.4 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Francis Picabia (1879-1953), *L'Oeil Cacodylate (The Cacodylic Eye)*, 1921, 148.6 × 117.4 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris

- **Francis Picabia** contracted an eye infection and his doctor prescribed **Cacodylate de Sodium**, a common medicine at the time. **When friends visited** during recovery, he asked them to **inscribe images or words** on his working canvas. Canvas became covered with signatures, messages, and collaged photographs—group art project.
  - **Born in Paris to Spanish father and French mother**, Picabia studied at **École des Arts Décoratifs**. Initially worked in Impressionist style before embracing **Cubism around 1909**. Arrived in **New York** days apart from Duchamp in June 1915. The two formed core of New York Dada.
  - At period of this painting, **lettering on modern European artwork was minimal**. This work proved **revolutionary**. Large block letters at top read "L'Oeil Cacodylate." Sizeable brown eye appears near bottom. Messages include "**Dada is great**," signed by Tristan Tzara. Contributions came from Jean Cocteau, Man Ray, and Georges Auric amongst others.
  - Work embodies Dada's collaborative spirit and rejection of singular artistic genius. The eye stares out, simultaneously surveillance and target. Picabia surrendered authorship to community of friends. Their inscriptions transformed canvas into social document—snapshot of Parisian avant-garde in 1921.

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Hannah Höch (1889-1978), *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919-20, 114 × 90 cm, Nationalgalerie, Berlin

Hannah Höch (1889-1978), *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919-20, 114 × 90 cm, Nationalgalerie, Berlin

- **Hannah Höch** incorporated images of machines, demonstrators, intellectuals, cabaret dancers, military leaders, politicians, and some Dada artists. The work depicts the **chaotic collision** of images from the Weimar Republic. Höch used **photomontage technique**—cutting and pasting photographs from magazines and newspapers.
- Höch was **born in Gotha, Germany**. She studied graphic arts and design to satisfy her father. Moved to Berlin and worked as designer for lace and embroidery company. She joined Dada movement along with **Raoul Hausmann**, with whom **she had affair**. Their relationship **lasted seven years despite him being married**.
- The title refers to the kitchen knife—a domestic tool associated with women's work. Which she metaphorically used to **cut through traditionally masculine domains of politics and public life**. Work appeared in First International Dada Fair in Berlin, June 1920. She was the **only woman exhibiting**.
- Text fragments throughout collage include "Dada" and "anti-Dada." **Einstein's head appears**. So does Käthe Kollwitz. The top-right is the Anti-Dada section showing Kaiser Wilhelm II, General von Hindenburg whose head is on a belly dancer, and other Government figures.
- Lower right is the **Great Dada World** including her **own photograph**. Work

became manifesto of sorts—**feminist intervention into male-dominated art world**.

## NOTES

- The work is in sections:
  - Top Right: The "**Anti-Dada**" Section. This corner represents the established order—the politicians and military leaders whom the Dadaists blamed for the disaster of World War I.
    - Kaiser Wilhelm II: His large, looming head is visible here. In a mocking gesture, Höch replaced his famous upturned moustache with two upside-down wrestlers, emasculating the former emperor.
    - General von Hindenburg: His head is placed on the body of a belly dancer, further lampooning the "macho" Prussian military tradition.
    - Government Figures: Other Weimar leaders like Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske appear here, often merged with absurd or feminine bodies to undermine their authority.
  - Top Left: **The Dadaists and Intellectuals**. This section features figures associated with the Dada movement and revolutionary thought.
    - Einstein & Marx: Images of Albert Einstein and Karl Marx appear, representing the intellectual and political shift toward a new, radical world.
    - The Word "DADA": Text fragments like "Dada" are scattered here, signifying the movement's presence as a disruptive force against the "Anti-Dada" establishment.
  - Bottom Left: **Dada Propaganda**. This area focus on mass movements and political upheaval.
    - The Masses: Images of large crowds and protests represent the social unrest in Berlin.
    - Revolutionaries: You can see the heads of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the leaders of the Spartacist uprising who were assassinated in 1919. Their presence marks the violent birth of the Weimar Republic.
  - Bottom Right: **The "Great Dada World"**. This is the "pro-Dada"

corner where Höch places her colleagues and herself.

- The Artists: Recognizable heads of Berlin Dadaists like George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann, and John Heartfield appear here.
- The Artist's Signature: Instead of a traditional signature, Höch pasted a small photograph of her own head onto the corner of a map showing European countries where women had the right to vote.
- Key Symbols and Their Significance
- **The Kitchen Knife:** The "knife" is a metaphor for Höch's artistic process. By using a domestic tool (traditionally associated with women's work in the kitchen) to "cut" through the male-dominated political landscape, she reclaims power. It suggests that women's domestic reality can be a weapon for cultural revolution.
- **The "Beer-Belly":** The title refers to the "Beer-Belly" of the Weimar Republic—a symbol of the bloated, lazy, and corrupt bureaucracy of the old German middle class that survived the war.
- **Machinery and Cogs:** The entire montage is held together by images of ball bearings, gears, and wheels. This represents the mechanization of modern life and the "industrialization" of death experienced during WWI. It also reflects the Dadaist view of themselves as "monteurs" (engineers or fitters) rather than traditional "artists."
- **The Central Figure:** In the middle of the chaos is the **head of the Expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz** attached to the body of a nimble dancer (Niddy Impekoven). This figure represents the **"New Woman"**—agile, independent, and central to the new cultural epoch.
- The work is a **feminist and political manifesto**. By splicing together high-ranking men with female dancers and placing herself alongside a map of suffrage, Höch challenged the patriarchal structures of both the German government and **the Dada movement itself (which was notoriously sexist)**. It captures the specific "vibe" of 1919 Berlin: a city caught between the ruins of an empire and the frantic, mechanical energy of a new, uncertain democracy.

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Man Ray (1890-1976), *Rayograph*, 1922, 23.5 × 17.8 cm, Gelatin Silver Photogram, Various Collections

Man Ray (1890-1976), *Rayograph*, 1922, 23.5 × 17.8 cm, Gelatin Silver Photogram, Various Collections

- **Man Ray laid objects on light-sensitive paper** and exposed the paper to light. He called the result "Rayographs". The dimmer a specific object appears the further it is from the photographic paper giving depth to the artwork. He made multiple different rayographs with everyday objects. Tristan Tzara called them **pure Dada creations**.
- Born **Emmanuel Radnitzky** in Philadelphia to **Russian-Jewish immigrant family**. Changed name to **Man Ray** around 1909. Moved to New York in 1913. Met Duchamp and Picabia in 1915. Trio formed core of New York Dada scene.
- Ray discovered rayograph technique by accident. He'd forgotten to expose image and was waiting for it to appear in darkroom. He placed some objects on the photo paper. Upon seeing the result he became excited by the possibilities. Whilst he didn't invent photograms, his became the most famous.
- In fact, the earliest person to use this technique was Anna Atkins (1799–1871), an English botanist and photographer who is the first female photographer, the first person to publish a book illustrated with photographic images in 1843 and the first to use direct exposure of objects on photographic paper.

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Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), *Merzbild 9B, Das Grosse Ich-Bild (Merz Picture 9B, The Big I-Picture)*, 1919, 96.8 × 70.2 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), *Merzbild 9B, Das Grosse Ich-Bild (Merz Picture 9B, The Big I-Picture)*, 1919, 96.8 × 70.2 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

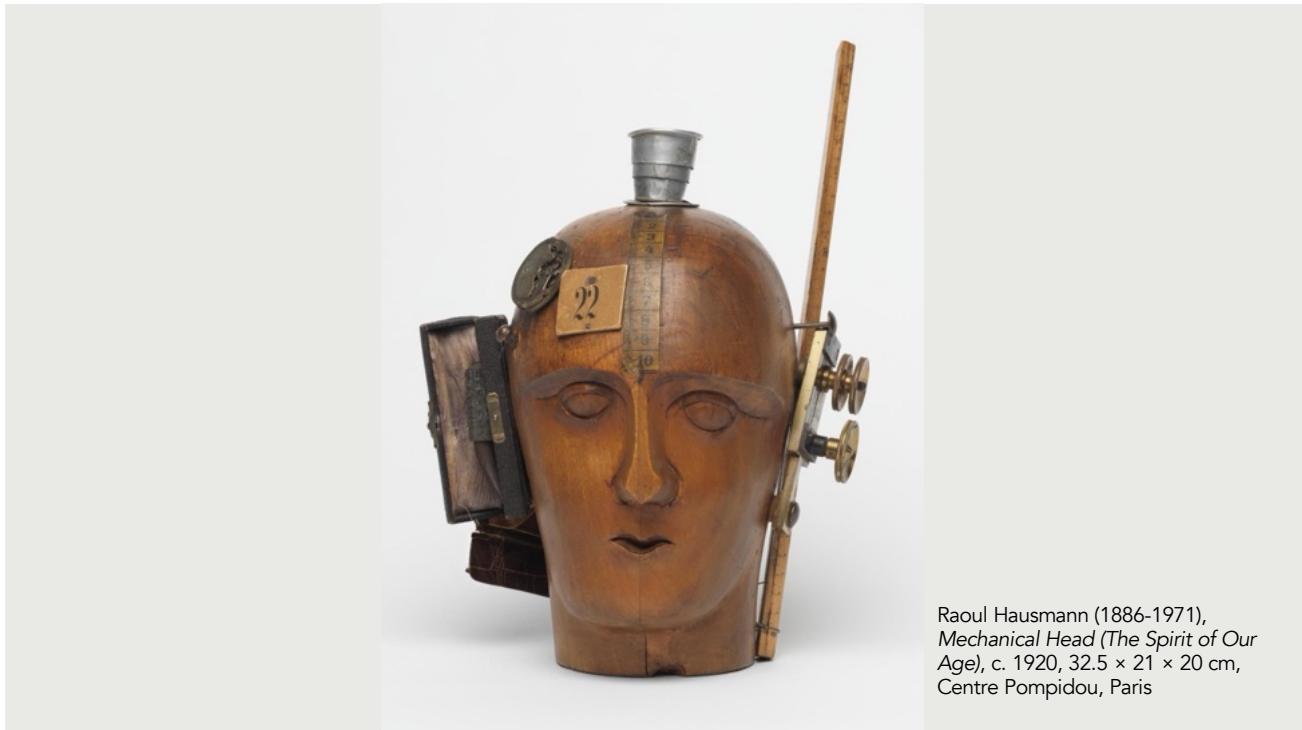
- **Schwitters** invented term **Merz** to describe his work. Word came from fragment of text saying **Commerzbank** that he'd incorporated into collage. **Merz became his personal brand of Dada**. He claimed it as **art made from everything and anything**.
- **Born in Hanover**, Germany. Studied at **Dresden Academy of Art** from 1909-1914. Applied to join Berlin Dada but **Richard Huelsenbeck rejected him**. Huelsenbeck thought Schwitters **too bourgeois**. Rejection led Schwitters to develop Merz as independent movement.
- This assemblage includes **wood, metal, paint, fabric, cardboard, and printed paper**. Large yellow shape dominates centre. Fragments of advertisements and tickets cluster around edges. The work was constructed from rubbish collected from streets—Schwitters called it **found poetry**.
- **Every scrap carried history**. Train ticket implied journey. Newspaper fragment suggested specific date. Together they formed **autobiography in refuse**. He transformed trash into art through composition and colour.

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Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971),  
*Mechanical Head (The Spirit of Our Age)*, c. 1920, 32.5 × 21 × 20 cm,  
Centre Pompidou, Paris

Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971), *Mechanical Head (The Spirit of Our Age)*, c. 1920, 32.5 × 21 × 20 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris

- Hausmann's assemblage was meant to symbolise the **empty spirit of post-World War I era**. Work consists of **wooden dummy head** with various objects attached. Tape measure wraps around the skull. There is a pocket watch mechanism, wallet, metal cup, jewellery box, and typewriter parts protruding from the surface.
- **Born in Vienna**, Hausmann moved to Berlin as child. **Trained as painter** before embracing Dada around 1918. He was **founding member of Club Dada in Berlin**, active from 1918 to 1923. **Berlin Dada proved more political than its Zurich counterpart**. War's proximity intensified their rage.
- Hausmann called this work ***Spirit of Our Age***. The title is ironic. Modern man is reduced to a measuring device and clockwork. Each object represents an aspect of our mechanised society. The tape measure suggests our obsession with **quantification**. The watch mechanism indicates **time's tyranny**. The wallet represents capitalism.
- The head is a hairdresser's dummy—already a commodified object. Hausmann purchased it and added found objects. The work critiques how modern industrial society empties humanity of any spiritual depth. Man becomes a receptacle for external inputs rather than a thinking being. **Hausmann and Hannah Höch developed photomontage** technique together during their relationship.

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Max Ernst (1891-1976), *Celebes*, 1921, 125.4 × 107.9 cm, Tate, London

Max Ernst (1891-1976), *Celebes*, 1921, 125.4 × 107.9 cm, Tate, London

- This painting in the Tate shows a bizarre **elephant-like creature** constructed from mechanical parts. Form suggests **African grain storage bin** called **celebes**. A headless female mannequin stands in the foreground with its right arm raised. Flying fish hover in the sky. The work combines Dada's absurdity with **proto-Surrealist dream logic**.
- Ernst was **born in Brühl, Germany**. His father was teacher for deaf children and amateur painter. Ernst studied **philosophy and psychology at Bonn University** but never completed his degree. He **met Jean Arp** in 1914.
- World War I interrupted his artistic development as he served in **German artillery**. The experience traumatised him profoundly. He wrote that he died on 1 August 1914—the first day of the war. A young man **aspiring to become magician and poet** emerged from conflict in 1918 and Dada offered an outlet for the horror he had seen.
- This painting was made in **Cologne** before Ernst moved to Paris. He founded **Cologne Dada** with Johannes Baargeld in 1919. **Police shut down their first exhibition for obscenity**. They tried to shock every bourgeois sensibility. The entrance was a men's urinal, visitors were met by a young girl in a white Holy Communion gown reciting obscene poetry, there was a glass tank filled with what looked like blood with an arm sticking out and a block of wood with an axe attached by a chain inviting visitors to destroy the artwork.
- By 1921, Ernst was developing a new visual language. Using a combination of

collage elements, mechanical forms, and a **dreamlike atmosphere** that pointed toward **Surrealism**. André Breton would recruit Ernst to that movement within year.

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## How to Make a Dadaist Poem

### (method of Tristan Tzara)

To make a Dadaist poem:

- Take a newspaper.
- Take a pair of scissors.
- Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
- Cut out the article.
- Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
- Shake it gently.
- Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
- Copy conscientiously.
- The poem will resemble you.
- And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

--Tristan Tzara

Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), To Make a Dadaist Poem (Instructions), 1920, Published Text

- **Tzara published instructions** in the Dada manifesto.
  - Take a newspaper.
  - Take a pair of scissors.
  - Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
  - Cut out the article.
  - Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
  - Shake it gently.
  - Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
  - Copy conscientiously.
  - The poem will resemble you.
- He was born Samuel Rosenstock in Moinești, **Romania and changed** his name to **Tristan Tzara around 1915**. He arrived in **Zurich in 1915** to study **mathematics and philosophy**. He met **Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings** and became a driving force for Dada after Ball departed in 1917.
- The instructions represent Dada's embrace of **chance and its rejection of authorial control**. The method **democratised poetry**—anyone could do it. **No talent, training, or inspiration required**. Just scissors, newspaper, and

willingness to surrender control.

- **Tzara proved a tireless promoter of Dada.** He organised exhibitions, performances, and publications. Edited Dada magazine from 1917-1921. Staged provocative events throughout Europe. **His poem instructions became one of most famous Dada texts.** They inspired William S. Burroughs' cut-up technique and David Bowie's (pronounced "BOH-ee") **songwriting** method decades later. In 1922, Tzara moved to Paris where tensions with André Breton eventually split the movement.

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Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943), *Dada Head*, 1920, 29.5 × 19.5 × 20 cm, Painted Wood, Kunstmuseum Basel

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943), *Dada Head*, 1920, 29.5 × 19.5 × 20 cm, Painted Wood, Kunstmuseum Basel

- **Taeuber-Arp carved this head from single piece of wood** and painted it with geometric patterns. The abstract forms suggest human features. The oval shape indicates a head. The curved line implies a nose. Circles mark the eyes. Severe geometry contradicts organic subject matter.
- **Born in Davos, Switzerland. She studied textile design** in Germany. Became **accomplished dancer** studying under Rudolf Laban. Laban was known for rejecting classical movement in favour of more natural body language. She **performed at Cabaret Voltaire** wearing masks made by Marcel Janco.
- (CLICK) Hans Richter noted in his memoir of **Zurich Dada** that masks and costumes **deliberately subverted cabaret tradition** where female performers' **attractiveness and implied sexual availability were taken for granted**. Taeuber-Arp's masked performances rejected objectification.(CLICK)
- She **married Jean Arp in 1922**. Their artistic collaboration lasted until her death. She **designed textiles, furniture, interiors, and taught at applied arts schools**. The Nazi regime considered her work **degenerate a sure sign of a truly modern and committed artist**. She **fled to southern France** in 1940. In 1943, she died from **accidental carbon monoxide poisoning** from faulty stove. She was 53. Her death devastated Arp.

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George Grosz (1893-1959), *The Funeral*, 1917-18, 140 × 110 cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

George Grosz (1893-1959), *The Funeral*, 1917-18, 140 × 110 cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

- **Grosz depicted this chaotic street scene** during a funeral. The **coffin perches precariously** on cart pulled through crowded Berlin street. **Buildings tilt** at impossible angles. **Figures appear grotesque**—bloated faces, twisted bodies. Work captures society's **moral collapse** following war.
- **Born Georg Ehrenfried Groß in Berlin.** He changed the spelling of his name which ended in an Eszett (pronounced “ess-tset”) to an “sz” to sound more English and in rejection of German nationalism. He studied at **Dresden Academy** before World War I. He was drafted into army in 1914 and declared unfit for service after a mental breakdown in 1915.
- Grosz was a member of **Club Dada in Berlin**, which was active from 1918 to 1923. Berlin Dada's proximity to the war zone made art more overtly political than Zurich's. Artists created **satirical paintings and collages featuring wartime imagery** and political cartoon clippings reformed as biting commentaries.
- This painting shows Grosz's savage critique of German bourgeoisie. Fat businessmen, corrupt politicians, and militarists populate his works. Skeleton wearing top hat rides bicycle. Death stalks streets openly. German authorities **charged Grosz with insulting the military in 1920**. He faced further **obscenity trials in 1933** and the Nazis declared his work degenerate. He emigrated to America the same year.

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Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and Francis Picabia, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, 19.7 x 12.4 cm, multiple versions, various collections

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and Francis Picabia, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, 19.7 x 12.4 cm, multiple versions, various collections

- A **cheap reproduction of Leonardo's Mona Lisa** with a pencilled moustache and goatee. Below, he wrote the letters "**L.H.O.O.Q.**" in pencil. When read aloud in French, these letters sound like "**Elle a chaud au cul**"—meaning "**She has a hot arse**" or more specifically it meant "**She's sexually aroused**". He created this in Paris after returning from New York.
- He made several versions. The most famous is a **postcard-sized reproduction** he defaced in 1919. It was a gift for **Francis Picabia**. The gesture mocked the reverence surrounding high art masterpieces. Leonardo's painting was already the world's most famous artwork. Adding facial hair transformed sacred cultural property into a dirty joke.
- He had **returned to Paris in 1919** after four years in America. The city was recovering from war. **Millions had died**. Traditional values seemed bankrupt. The **Dada movement emerged from this disillusionment**. Tristan Tzara in Zurich, André Breton in Paris, and he himself represented different strands of this anti-art rebellion.
- The moustache was inspired by an earlier idea. In **Buenos Aires**, Francis Picabia had drawn a moustache on a Leonardo reproduction for a magazine cover. He refined the concept. His version was smaller, more intimate, more transgressive.
- He later created a "**corrected readymade**" version in 1965 called "**L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved**". This was an unaltered Mona Lisa reproduction. The joke had come full

circle. By removing nothing, he created another readymade. "The curious thing," he said, "is that the original now looks retouched."

## **PRONUNCIATION GUIDE**

L.H.O.O.Q.: el-ahsh-oh-oh-KOO

Elle a chaud au cul: el ah show oh KUL

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Marcel Duchamp  
(1887-1968), *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?*, 1921, 11.4 x 22.2 x 16.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?*, 1921, 11.4 x 22.2 x 16.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

- A **small white birdcage** containing **151 marble cubes** resembling **sugar lumps**, a **thermometer**, and a **cuttlebone**. The marble blocks make the cage **unexpectedly heavy** when lifted. The title was painted on one side of the cage. He created this as a **wedding gift** for the art patrons **Louise and Walter Arensberg**.
- The work confounds expectations through weight and material. Sugar cubes should be light; these marble blocks are not. A **thermometer** measures temperature, yet placed in a cage it **measures nothing**. The **cuttlebone**, used to **sharpen bird beaks**, serves **no function** without a bird. Everything appears functional but operates uselessly.
- He was living in Paris again after several years alternating between cities. His relationship with the Arensbergs was close. They had become **his primary American patrons**, purchasing works and supporting him financially. Walter **defended Fountain** at the Independent Artists exhibition. Their Philadelphia home became a salon for avant-garde artists.
- The title poses an **absurd question**. Why would Rose Sélavy sneeze? One interpretation suggests the marble "sugar" causes toothache, prompting a sneeze. Another notes that "sneeze" sounds like the German "niesen" and French "nicher" (to nest). The thermometer might indicate fever. These connections remain deliberately unclear. My train of thought although hardly an explanation is that a sneeze is an involuntary physical action. He is asking why

he doesn't act spontaneously. Remember his female name means Eros, the god of love, that's life. The object is a cage, like bird cage so designed to contain and all it contains is sweetness but a sweetness that can rot the body.

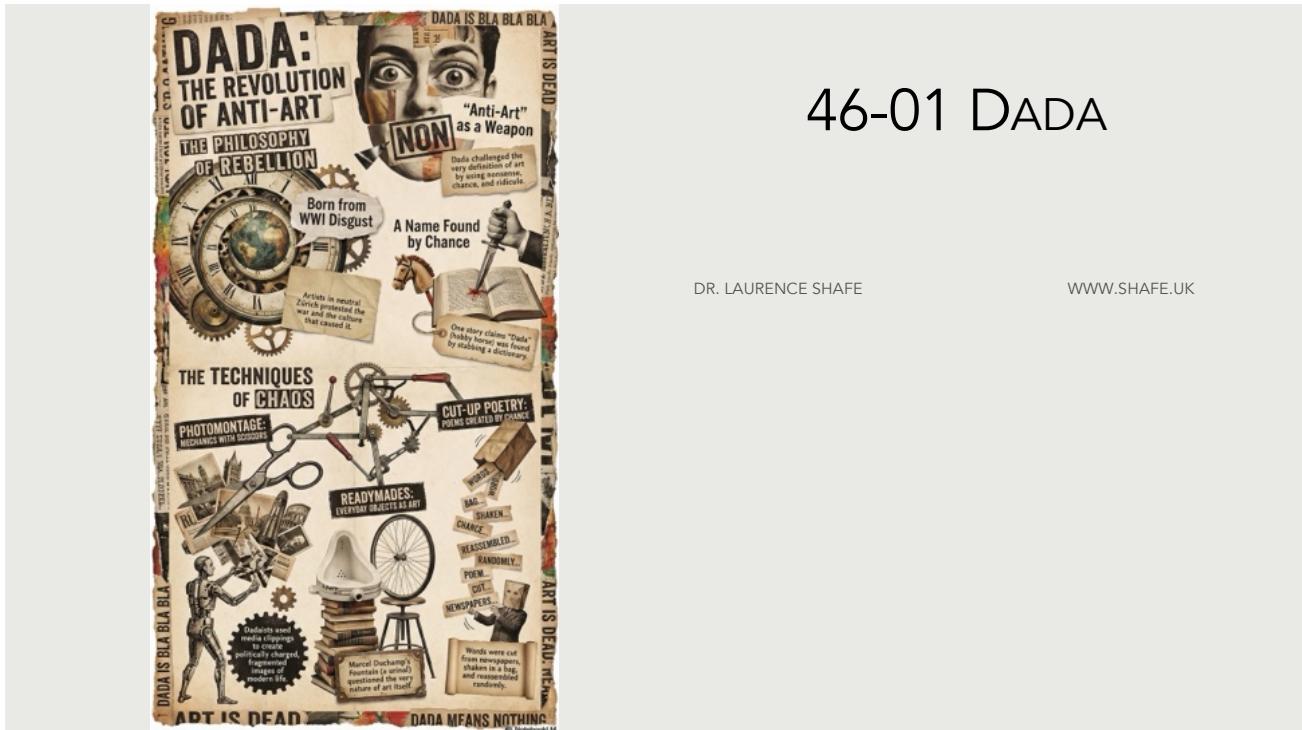
- He was also developing his major work The Large Glass during this period. That project consumed years of effort. Meanwhile, these smaller readymades required minimal time but maximum thought. He produced them sporadically, never flooding the market. Scarcity maintained their mystique.

## **PRONUNCIATION GUIDE**

Rose Sélavy: rohz say-lah-VEE

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## 46-01 DADA

- What was Dada?
- When you an artist horrified and disgusted with World War I what do you do?
- Stab a dictionary, invent Dada, **reject everything** that went before as, one way or another, it led to the war.
- Cut out fragments of life and reassemble them, select any object and it is art, make poetry by shaking works out of a bag.
- It's all **anti-art**, that is anti all **conventional art**. It's a **revolution** and it gave rise to **Surrealism** and later **inspired Pop Art and Conceptual art**.
- Thank you for watching and I look forward to seeing you again, bye for now.



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