

# Depicting Duchamp, Francis Naumann Fine Art, New York



Clayton Press Former Contributor

Arts

“Can we try to define art? We have tried. Everybody has tried. In every century there is a new definition of art, meaning that there is no one essential that is good for all centuries.” Marcel Duchamp, 1959

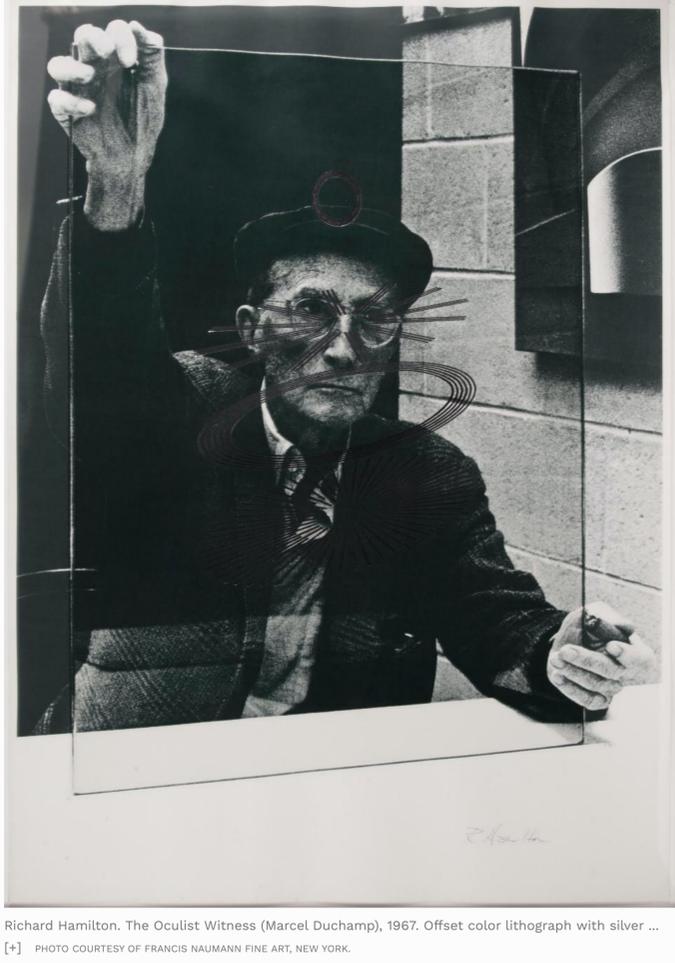
Cue balls are the white balls that are used to strike other balls in a range of billiard sports, like snooker and pool. They are used to separate—to break—the object balls that have been racked together on a table or other playing surface. If you put “English” on it, you can change the spin, trajectory and overall behavior of the cue ball.



Marcel Duchamp (Cue Ball), 2019. Dye sublimation on cast polyester resin with 1 inch black rubber ...  
[+] PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANCIS NAUMANN FINE ART, NEW YORK.

*Marcel Duchamp (Cue Ball)*, a 2-inch diameter cast polyester resin sculpture by TR Ericsson, is a near perfect metaphor for the seminal influence of Marcel Duchamp on the development of contemporary art. (*Marcel Duchamp [Cue Ball]* is from an edition of 100, and is available for purchase from the gallery for \$250.) Duchamp argued for an art of ideas rather than images or objects. He rejected purely visual or retinal pleasure, deeming it facile. He preferred a more cerebral, concept-driven approach to art making and, for that matter, viewing.

The readymade, Duchamp’s most striking, iconoclastic gesture, is arguably the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most influential development on artists’ creative processes. Yet, Duchamp did not perceive readymade objects as just “radical experiments.” As Nan Rosenthal clarified in 2004, Duchamp even “viewed paint as an industrially made product, and hence painting as an ‘assisted-readymade.’”



Richard Hamilton. The Oculist Witness (Marcel Duchamp), 1967. Offset color lithograph with silver ...  
[+] PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANCIS NAUMANN FINE ART, NEW YORK.

From his first readymade—*Bicycle Wheel* (1913)—Duchamp’s influence on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century art and art movements has been pervasive, from Cubism to Dada to Surrealism. His thinking, revealed primarily through his own object making, paved the way for later genres such as Pop art, Minimalism and Conceptualism and today’s postmodern polystylism. Like a cue ball, Duchamp broke a racked set of standardized expectations, provoking “the creative imagination of contemporary artists worldwide,” that will continue long into the future.

As the exhibition’s title suggests, *DEPICTING DUCHAMP: Portraits of Marcel Duchamp and/or Rose Sélavy* focuses on renderings of Duchamp and/or his female alter-ego, Rose Sélavy (*c’est la vie*: such is life.) “If we combine the number of portraits made by his contemporaries with those made posthumously, Duchamp has been depicted more often than any other major artist of the modern era,” wrote Francis Naumann, gallerist, Duchamp expert and Dada scholar.



Carlo Maria Mariani. Portrait of Duchamp, 1990. Oil on canvas, 33 x 23 inches. PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANCIS NAUMANN FINE ART, NEW YORK.

The first formal painted portrait of Marcel Duchamp is by Walter Pach, an artist who helped to organize the 1913 Armory Show, the legendary exhibition that included Duchamp’s infamous *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Naumann’s curatorial selection includes a total of 73 unique portraits of Duchamp, from now-deceased contemporaries or followers (for example, Tom Chimes, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Man Ray, Richard Hamilton and Ray Johnson) and living artists (Jasper Johns, Cary Leibowitz, Yasumasa Morimura, Richard Pettibone and Mark Tansey.) The exceptionally diverse media used by artists to depict Duchamp range from hand embroidery (Christa Maiwald), to rose-scented wall paper (Brice Brown), from cut keys (Tom Shannon) to more conventional media, like bronzes, photographs and oils.



Cary Leibowitz. Mr. Duchamp Miss Selavy, 2017. Dymo tape on found photo, 7 x 9 inches. PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANCIS NAUMANN FINE ART, NEW YORK.

Duchamp’s ideas are “as prescient today as they were when first introduced over 100 years ago, forever altering the very definition of art.” Works by older artists recall Duchamp as a brother, friend and fellow artist. Works by younger contemporary artists provide a sense that Duchamp’s influence is still alive and well. He was the cue ball in the break shot of modern art.

*DEPICTING DUCHAMP: Portraits of Marcel Duchamp and/or Rose Sélavy* at Francis Naumann Fine Art, New York, through February 28, 2020.