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Marcel Duchamp

967 Words

The world knows the Renaissance gave art a new life, a new conception of which art appreciation was augmented universally. Yet, it was not until the early 20th century¹ that people understand what lies behind the simple word like art. Marcel Duchamp, a French artist, introduced an unconventional way of appreciating art as to see, not through eyes, but through the heart of its content. Marcel Duchamp brought his masterpieces both notable and notorious reputation, by his beliefs that art could start from anything, not just from motionless sculptures or cadaverous paintings. Through his life, Marcel Duchamp had created numerous paintings that engaged the world to him, which include those illustrating Surrealism, Cubism, and Dadaism, and his unique readymades.

Consider his foremost famous illustration in 1912, *Nude Descending a Staircase no.2*. His attempt to revolute the art first began from this painting, when it shifted away from just cubism, of which its weakness is because of its mostly rigid and stagnant passion, to phases of movements. *Nude Descending a Staircase no.2* visually manifests nothing more than lines and colors in the painting, but implicitly exhibits a beautiful body of a young woman walking from the left of the painting to its right. However, no matter how innovative his first masterpiece could show, *Nude Descending a Staircase no.2* was disputed by the art critics groups oppressively as it was too unconventional to be acquiesced at that time, resulting in his later behavior of

¹Wikipedia contributors. "Marcel Duchamp." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 10 Feb. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Duchamp>

rejection and dispassion in joining groups with other artists. Although the realistic art appreciators scandalized his art at that time, Marcel Duchamp continued to create more eccentric works to the world.

Apart from famous, or notorious, paintings created by imagination of Marcel Duchamp lie his twenty-one iconoclastic readymades. Readymades are collections of anything, ranging from a chair to a bicycle wheel, connected together to create a new kind of art that attracts people to think and appreciate the art from their mind, since the arts called readymade barely engaged people visually. His first readymade, Bicycle Wheel², is a combination of an upside down unicycle wheel on top of a chair. Two of daily objects created an unordinary object, which resembles nothing about art, but Marcel Duchamp is the first person who made anything to be an art. He attracted audiences to wonder what is hidden, mentally, inside this unordinary object. This first readymade suggests perspective to the audiences, for instance, a humanlike form resemblance, a joy of watching it spins, and an unrealistically impossible object which brings happiness to the viewers.

His first readymade showed a glimpse of successful reception, as he continued to think of more readymades. Ones with high anticipations are Traveler's Folding Item and With Hidden Noise. Marcel Duchamp converted audiences' attention to his readymades from a plain unordinary object like Bicycle Wheel, to extraordinary objects like those follows. Traveler's Folding Item is literally nothing more than a typewriter's dust cover leather sheet, but Marcel Duchamp ideally varied a mere sheet into the cover of anything inside. Marcel Duchamp kindly placed this typewriter

²Andrew Stafford. "Bicycle Wheel and other readymades." Making Sense of Marcel Duchamp. 2 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.understandingduchamp.com/>>

cover without a typewriter at the level of people's eyes, making them curious about what might be inside this cover, and sparsely lurked under the sheet to see what, also, might be inside. Another successful readymade is called With Hidden Noise. With Hidden Noise is created by the assistance of Marcel Duchamp's friend, who hid an unknown object inside a ball of twine. Marcel Duchamp later kept the ball between two copper plates with four bolts sticking each corners. This unknown-hidden readymade lured people to touch to feel the surface, shake to hear the sound, and wonder what is inside this meticulously secured object. The answer of the hidden object is still unknown, since Marcel Duchamp's friend had already passed away longed before he revealed what is hidden inside. The two mentioned, along with other eighteen, readymades are the innovation of art that accentuated the mental appreciation.

Marcel Duchamp illustrated his art opposition and position through his masterpieces. Hence there is one Dadaist readymade that, too much, revealed his standpoint and was debated from the art society at that time. The scandalous readymade called Fountain was originally created to fight against conventional art³. Fountain, a simple urinal with a signature R.Mutt, Marcel Duchamp's fictitious name, was severely critiqued from the art exhibition by the Society of Independent Artists exhibitions, which exhibited all artists' works no matter what they might be, and was later rejected and removed from the exhibitions at that time. Marcel Duchamp explained to those accused him as plagiarized that what importance is not who created the object, but who illustrated the meaning and significance of that object. His strong standpoint was later changed the perspective of viewing arts and clarified its

³Andrew Stafford. "Fountain." Making Sense of Marcel Duchamp. 2 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.understandingduchamp.com/>>

obfuscation.

Ultimately, although Marcel Duchamp's attempts in art revolution created no immediate success, he slowly engaged people to absorb art appreciation through thinking of the meanings in each matters. Marcel Duchamp might teach us how to view the art, but what is more important is that he taught us how to approach the cruel society we are living. The stronger standpoint Marcel Duchamp positioned himself, even if it was to ameliorate the society, the worse acceptance he got from the society itself. His lighter readymades, like Bicycle Wheel, Traveler's Folding Item and With Hidden Noise, was curiously accepted by the audiences, while his more ferocious ones, like Nude Descending a Staircase no.2 and Fountain, were cruelly rejected. Marcel Duchamp vividly exemplified us that human minds are too harsh to encounter with harsh approaches.