

impression. There was no trace of this liberating element in two of his most successful “Cubist” paintings of 1912, *Dances at the Spring* and *Procession, Seville*. By 1912, however, with paintings such as *Udnie (Young American Girl)* and *Edtaonisl (Ecclesiastical)*, the formal language had been greatly expanded in keeping with the more personal nature of the theme—Picabia’s voyage to the United States aboard the same ship as the dancer Mlle Napierkowska and a Dominican priest who was fascinated by her. Finally in *I See Again in Memory My Dear Udnie*, c. 1914, the erotic implications of the two previous paintings became fully explicit. Reliving in memory the series of events on board ship, Picabia relied even more heavily on the Duchamp of 1912. His reverie on the “star-dancer” is expressed in sequences of forms that range from the geometrical to the biomorphic, from the totally abstract to the almost specific (in forms that resemble electrical appliances). Yet, when compared to its major source, the display of passion in the painting is much more public, altogether less hermetic, than the transformation taking place within Duchamp’s *Bride*. Picabia’s bolder, more flamboyant forms enact events on an erotic plane, but as spectacle rather than as mysterious event.

### Marcel Duchamp

*Bicycle Wheel*. 1913 (original)

Illustrated on page 232

**Joseph Kosuth**, in *Contemporary Art in Context*, 1990, page 47

Duchamp is difficult to talk about because his work is so rich in its complexity. For me, it changed the way artists see their activity: we no longer believe, simply, in certain institutionalized forms of authority in art.

There is a brief to be made as an artist against certain forms, because those forms constitute fixed meanings. Readymades that are naturalized as the language of art are not seen, in fact, as ready-made. Any artist who goes to art school, who is given a canvas and paint, realizes that you didn’t invent those mediums. It’s given to you, and that’s a Readymade. But because our conception of art acknowledges the authority of that form, it’s considered a naturally given one.

Institutions of art . . . are another framing device. One of my favorite stories . . . happened some years ago, when Duchamp died. They [The Museum of Modern Art] put together a small installation of some Duchamps from the collection. One was a Rotorelief:<sup>1</sup> it was set on a pedestal and next to it was a text by Mr. William Rubin which discussed why this was a masterpiece of the twentieth century, declared that it smashed

forever the boundaries between painting and sculpture, it was not a painting, it was not a sculpture, and went on like that in a very interesting and intelligent way. On the pedestal was a big sign that said “Please do not touch the sculpture.”

In one way, this reflects a problem of any museum that serves the public, but it points to something fundamental. Basically, art is making meaning. In a sense, it’s philosophy made concrete, in a period in which one can no longer believe in speculative philosophy, which has become an academic activity. Art alone answers certain questions and deals with certain issues in the world. It clarifies and makes visible how our consciousness is formed in mass culture, and takes mass culture and uses it in a way that reveals the whole internal mechanism of culture. That is a very important human role of art in a period when we don’t have the spiritual satisfaction that a traditional religion can give us and the kind of cultural perks that come from homogeneous culture in which, as you get older, life is more meaningful and death is meaningful. Science as a religion deprives us of that, and so, as we continue, we are finding art is more and more valuable to people.

### Marcel Duchamp

*Network of Stoppages*. 1914

Illustrated on page 233

**Marcel Duchamp**, in *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, 1946, pages 19, 20, 21

“The great trouble with art in this country [America] at present, and apparently in France also, is that there is no spirit of revolt—no new ideas appearing among the younger artists. They are following along the paths beaten out by their predecessors, trying to do better what their predecessors have already done. In art there is no such thing as perfection. And a creative lull occurs always when artists of a period are satisfied to pick up a predecessor’s work where he dropped it and attempt to continue what he was doing. When on the other hand you pick up something from an earlier period and adapt it to your own work an approach can be creative. The result is not new; but it is new inasmuch as it is a different approach.

“Art is produced by a succession of individuals expressing themselves; it is not a question of progress. Progress is merely an enormous pretension on our part. There was no progress for example in J.-B.-C. Corot over Phidias. And ‘abstract or naturalistic’ is merely a fashionable form of talking—today. It is no problem: an abstract painting may not look at all ‘abstract’ in 50 years. . . .

“The basis of my own work during the years just