

PRESS ARCHIVE



Artists to pay respects to the revolutionary Marcel Duchamp in new exhibition

The exhibition, which opens this week, now features more than 50 artists, including Peter Blake, Keith Tyson, Gavin Turk, Michael Craig-Martin, Cornelia Parker and David Shrigley

Holly Williams

When Marcel Duchamp placed a bicycle wheel on a wooden stool just over a hundred years ago, did he know exactly what he was setting spinning?

With *Bicycle Wheel*, he launched the concept of the “readymade” – an everyday object that is art because the artist says so. And then, four years later, created a “readymade” icon in *Fountain*, the urinal, laid on its back, regularly cited as the most important single artwork of the 20th century. The readymades are widely viewed as the birth of conceptual art. Yet given that, a century later, we’re still not done with the “but is it art?” question, it’s fair to say Duchamp’s provocations are still relevant, still vital.

Indeed, barely a conceptually challenging piece of work can be produced without it being declared “Duchampian”. Director of Contemporary Art at the Fine Art Society Kate Bryan was, however, struck by how it was always critics, collectors and catalogues that trumpeted Duchamp’s influence – not artists themselves.

“To understand his legacy, the only thing you can do is ask artists,” she says. “I strongly believe that every artist working today has had the opportunity to go through a door that Duchamp opened for them: working through problems about the role of the artist, what constitutes art. It’s all pretty unanswerable stuff, but it’s producing great results – we’ve got such a tradition of beautifully creative conceptual art in this country.”

So she set out to display this legacy by asking contemporary artists to produce a piece of work for a group show entitled *What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me*. Bryan’s hunch, that artists are indebted to Duchamp, turned out to be correct – people began ringing her up to ask if they could be a part of it. “In any artist’s studio today, there is a ghost of Duchamp in the corner,” she insists.

The exhibition, which opens this week, now features more than 50 artists, including Peter Blake, Keith Tyson, Gavin Turk, Michael Craig-Martin, Cornelia Parker and David Shrigley. And it marks a new direction for the Fine Art Society. The UK’s oldest commercial gallery, established in 1876, it is moving with the times: the top floor, which used to be the flat for the managing director, is now a space for contemporary art. Bryan, clearly a persuasive character, has pulled off a first in the Society’s history by opening up the entire building to the public for the exhibition, with the works strikingly positioned throughout it, from bin bags slouching in corners to a totem pole looming up the stairwell.

“Duchamp started making this stuff a hundred years ago – and this gallery, in so many ways, still represents that past,” says Bryan. The juxtaposition of the Victorian architecture and the ultra-contemporary pieces should, she suggests “make it easier to see how shocking [his] works must have been.”



Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* 1917

We may no longer be shocked by readymades, but Duchamp’s playfulness and wit haven’t aged. And the artistic responses flaunt their own: there are cheeky homages, subversive portraits, conceptual jokes, and abundant references to Duchamp’s later love of ... chess. Light artist Chris Levine scanned one of Duchamp’s own chess pieces and turned it into a hologram; visitors will see it floating in the air “with unnerving realism” in one of the top rooms. What would Duchamp make of it? “I think he’d be turned on! He was looking for new experiences,” says Levine. “He broke the mould – art doesn’t have to be some rectangular thing that you stick on the wall. It’s how you respond to it that’s the point.”

Husband-and-wife team Rob and Nick Carter were also drawn to Duchamp’s enthusiasm for games. In 1924, he reckoned he’d come up with a way to defeat chance, by approaching roulette as if it were chess, and went off to Monte Carlo to test his theory in the casinos. “Unfortunately, I don’t think it worked,” says Rob. Their contribution, *Red 23*, is a roulette wheel – but a motorised one that never stops turning. It teasingly alludes not only to Duchamp’s readymades, but his failed gambling theories, his useless machines, and even his interest in erotic suspension: “unfulfilled sexual pleasure was something Duchamp touched on. It’s the anticipation – waiting for the ball to land, and it doesn’t; hopefully we leave the viewer wanting more,” says Nick.

Marcel Duchamp

Marcel Duchamp: exhibition to celebrate father of conceptual art

Fifty artists including Peter Blake and Cornelia Parker take part to show how the master of readymades influenced them

Mark Brown, arts correspondent

Thursday 9 October 2014 16.05 BST



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Save for later



Nancy Fouts' contribution to the Marcel Duchamp-inspired exhibition at the Fine Art Society. Photograph: Graeme Robertson

There is a pink plasticine laboratory-made vagina hanging in Britain's oldest commercial gallery, while that canteen of cutlery actually contains goat spines. And don't touch the staple on the wall: it's made from platinum.

The [Fine Art Society](#) - established in 1876 - will on Friday open a show paying tribute to one of the most influential artists of all time, Marcel Duchamp.

The exhibition features 50 artists showing works under the title [What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me](#). Kate Bryan, the society's director of contemporary art, said art historians and critics always talked about the legacy of Duchamp, but far less was heard from artists.

"To be honest, the more you study Duchamp, the less you know - he was so full of contradictions - so I thought the best thing to do was ask the artists."

Duchamp is the father of conceptual art and best known for his readymades, as in [the urinal he designated as art in 1917](#). His first pure readymade was a galvanised bottle rack from 100 years ago.



A piece by Gavin Turk is part of the Marcel Duchamp exhibition. Photograph: Graeme Robertson

The artists helping to celebrate this centenary include Peter Blake, Keith Tyson, Gavin Turk and Cornelia Parker, who is taking the opportunity to vent her feelings about an incident in 2003 when Stuckists cut the string she had tied around [Rodin's The Kiss at Tate Britain](#) for a piece called [The Distance: A Kiss With Added String](#).

Parker managed to find the string and has tied it into a ball around a concealed weapon.

"She won't say what it is," said Bryan. "But it is really, really heavy."

Henry Hudson has made a painted work with melted plasticine depicting one of four vaginas that have, apparently, been grown in a laboratory over the last year and been successfully implanted. The piece is called [Desire, Arousal, Lubrication, Orgasm, Satisfaction](#).

There are other obviously Duchampian exhibits including a crumpled sheet of paper by Martin Creed and a black bin bag filled with air by Ceal Floyer. Susan Collis has put some nails, staple and tacks in the wall - much closer inspection reveals they are made from silver, gold, platinum and semi-precious stones.

Other artists include Angela Palmer, who has made what looks like a canteen of cutlery but in fact contains silver-plated goat spines; and the American surrealist Nancy Fouts, who has created what appear to be pretty 19th century paintings but are parodies of them.

It is a big show for the society, taking up for the first time all five floors of its Mayfair townhouse.

Bryan said all the artists she approached had said yes, they all felt they owed such a debt to him.

"There is enormous complexity to what Duchamp did. If you wanted to boil him down, it would be that there should be freedom ... he thinks the power and the importance lies with the artist, he thinks art can be good, bad and indifferent, but it is still art. He changed the boundaries and made the playing field so much wider."

What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me is at the Fine Art Society, New Bond Street, London, until 5 November

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It's well documented that he was pranking the avant-garde of the art world. Rather than admit they fell for it, they make him a god and religiously refuse to admit they were wrong. He then milked the idiots for as much as he could so he could play chess without having to work.
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Whether he was taking the piss or not is academic: a lot of people have derived a lot of inspiration from what he did, and continue to do. Therefore, Duchamp is influential and important.
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What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me

The Fine Art Society asks artists how “readymades” inspired them

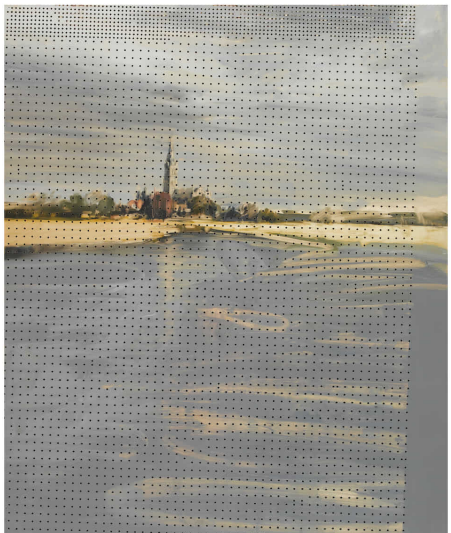
WHERE TO FIND ^

What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me, Friday October 10 to Wednesday November 5 2014 at The Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street, London W1 (020-7318 1895; www.faslondon.com).

OCTOBER 09 2014 / CHARLOTTE ABRAHAMS



A hundred years ago this year, Marcel Duchamp presented his first “pure readymade” and in so doing challenged the very notion of art itself. Laud him or loathe him, he has a legacy that cannot be ignored, and so a century after the *Bottle Rack* and *Bicycle Wheel* first appeared, The Fine Art Society is devoting all five floors of its central London home to an exhibition entitled *What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me*, which runs from Friday October 10 to Wednesday November 5.



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Whistler staged his first, salon-style-defying solo exhibition – and a performance-based work from *Non Zero One*, as well as sculpture, painting and works on paper.

Many of the works have been created specifically for the show, such as Idris Khan’s *Nude Descending Staircase* (between £55,000 and £65,000, edition of seven, second picture), and all are accompanied by an explanation of Duchamp’s effect on their own practice. Charming Baker, for example, writes “Monsieur Duchamp taught me that I must strive to do only things that I feel like doing”. His painting, *Four Percent*, is a striking oil landscape covered with drilled holes (£45,000-£55,000, third picture). Gavin Turk’s *Rotor Rings* (£55,000-£65,000, fourth picture), a bold, mixed-media piece receiving its first major debut here, is accompanied by Turk’s statement “He taught me that it’s possible”, while Michael Craig-Martin writes “Duchamp taught me never to accept received wisdom, including his own, at face value”. His painting, a new piece called *Art & Design 1917-2013* (£3,000-£8,000, first picture), was inspired by Duchamp’s 1920 *Fresh Widow* work.

This is a large and wide-ranging show. Challenging, amusing and surprising, it is a visual demonstration of Duchamp’s extraordinary and enduring influence.

What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me

Art, Film and video FREE ★★★★★ [Add review](#)



TIME OUT SAYS

DETAILS

USERS SAY

Marking the centenary of the readymade, this group show honours the inspirational Marcel Duchamp.

The man who gave art the readymade has been a constant source of inspiration for artists for the last hundred years. Marking the centenary, this group show honours the inspirational Marcel Duchamp and considers his on-going legacy. Notable artists featured, include Susan Collis, Martin Creed, Kendell Geers, Ricahrd Hamilton, Idris Khan, Joseph Kosuth, Cornelia Parker, David Shrigley and Gavin Turk.

EXHIBITIONS
Children of the revolution

By NICK CLARK

The Fine Art Society is to celebrate one of contemporary art's defining moments a hundred years on by giving over its entire building to artists inspired by Marcel Duchamp, the father of Dadaism. The show, *What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me*, opens next month.

Kate Bryan, director of The Fine Art Society, said: "It's a fascinating place to look at Duchamp's legacy on contemporary art today in a place you wouldn't expect to see it." The show commemorates the centenary of the artist's first "readymade" art work, which used every day, found, objects and called them art. It will take over all five floors of the Bond Street site with 50 artists, including new work by Gavin Turk and Michael Craig-Martin, who also exhibits an existing collage (above), which references Duchamp's *Fountain*. Two new collages by Peter Blake, entitled *The Animals' Fancy Dress Ball*, include images of Duchamp along with animals dressed in human clothes. Exciting work by Jonathan Yeo (a double portrait which makes reference to both himself and Duchamp) and Tim and Sue Webster's *Double Negative*, (left), a painted terrazzo, also feature. "It will be a bit like a Duchamp art theme park," says Bryan.

What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me, The Fine Art Society, London W1 (finsociety.com), 10 October to 5 November

THE FIELD

OCTOBER 2014 £4.40

Gotta lotta bottle

NOT so much the Object of the Month as of the Month of the century, Marcel Duchamp's *Bottle Rack*, "created" in 1914 and, though it no longer exists, the most subversive artwork of the past 100 years.

The bottle rack, bought by Duchamp "ready-made" in a Paris department store, is where all the arguments about conceptual art begin and end. It was his first unaltered art object, made by somebody else and simply "appropriated". By being lifted off the shelf, the *Bottle Rack* became 100% free of the artist's own "taste", for Duchamp hated taste. Questions about taste, of what was good, what bad, what was highbrow, what lowbrow, were for him the enemies of art. His is the mental universe in which we live now, for British questions about what is best and what is not are drowned in a

world where cultural democracy is king and no taste nominally exists at all. London stages several exhibitions around *What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me*. And before you write in, the *Bottle Rack* of 1914 was altered by Duchamp and thus not truly ready-made.



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The Big Picture: Duchamp



More than 50 contemporary artists have contributed to the exhibition *What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me* at The Fine Art Society in London. The gallery invited the artists to use Duchamp as the inspiration for their own submissions. Clockwise from left: *Stochastic Axle* for the Great Celestial Dynamo by Keith Tyson; *Too Close for Comfort* by Kendell Geers; and *Rotor Relief* by Gavin Turk.

10 to See

RECOMMENDED EXHIBITIONS THIS SEASON



2



1



3



4



5

1. Anne Collier, *David's Marilyn*, 2007. 2. Alexander Brinkley, *Video 2014*. 3. *Counting the ones*, Heidi Pitts, London and BC, 2014. 4. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 5. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 6. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 7. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 8. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 9. *Book of Hours*, 2014. 10. *Book of Hours*, 2014.

1 Anne Collier
MCA Chicago
22 November - 8 March
www.mca-chicago.org
Anne Collier's work turns a detached eye on the clichés of commercial photography. She identifies and challenges a lazing session in the culture of photography magazines and, in her series *Woman with a Camera*, appropriates images of movie heroines such as Marilyn Monroe, who now turns the camera back on the viewer in a feminist reversal of "the male gaze." The show explores themes such as autobiography, pop psychology and the art of seeing.

2 Conflict and Collisions
Heptworth Wakefield
1 October - 25 January
www.heptworthwakefield.org
This year's World War I centenary resonates throughout the Heptworth's autumn season, based around three new solo exhibitions of contemporary sculpture that examine conflicts, humanity and technology. Alexandra Brinkley makes use of leather "skins" - reminiscent of deflated human bodies. In addition, Folkert de Jong and Toby Ziegler take historical objects as their starting point, from Henry VIII's armour to recent images from Iraq.

3 Javier Téllez
Kunsthallen Zürich
31 October - 4 January
www.kunsthallen-zuerich.ch
Through video installations, Javier Téllez focuses on people on the margins of society. He addresses issues of normality and otherness, often working with untrained actors, such as patients from psychiatric clinics. His work reflects on the medium of film and its place in art history. This is the Venetian practitioner's first solo show at a major institution in Switzerland, after building his reputation through international group exhibitions such as 2012's *documenta 11*.

4 Mario Merz
Pace Gallery, London
Until 8 November
www.pacegallery.com
Mario Merz, whose practice began while in prison in 1945 for his anti-fascist activities, went on to help renew Italian art, as a leading light of the Arte Povera movement. Featuring sculpture, installation, painting, and works on paper from the mid-1960s to 2003, this is the first London exhibition of Merz's work in over 20 years, and explores ideas of existence, and the infinite progressions of number sequences and spirals.

5 What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me
Fine Art Society, London
10 October - 5 November
www.faulondon.com
The creative dialogue introduced by Duchamp continues to provide fertile ground for today's artists a century after his first "readymade." The show reveals this diversity; the 45 contributors range from Turner Prize winner Martin Creed, with a new sound installation, to "anti-conceptual" artist Miriam Elia, whose exhibits include a video stand-up comedy performance lampooning people such as Creed.

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

DIARY

Diary

Gavin Turk on the legacy of Marcel Duchamp

In 1913, Marcel Duchamp revolutionised art when he created his first ready-made, *Bicycle Wheel* – a work that would be unveiled to the public the following year. To mark the centenary, the Fine Art Society in London has commissioned pieces from more than 50 artists – among them Gavin Turk, Cornelia Parker, Martin Creed and Michael Craig-Martin – for a major exhibition: 'What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me'.

A cloud of meaning – and latterly misinformation and cliché – always descends on the artist Marcel Duchamp.

In 1913, he dispelled what he termed 'retinal art', including his own, in favour of the 'ready-made' (his word): a kind of poetic realism where the *objet d'art* is created by the 'institution' of art, using framing and context. To put it another way, it's not what we see, but how we see, that becomes paramount. The audience is crucial to both the reception and production of the art. I first saw his work on my foundation course, when I was a curious student: it was key to the transformation of my youthful thinking.

Duchamp is probably the most written about of any modern artist, with libraries of intellectual essays dedicated to his artistic output. It's fascinating to realise that the longevity of this struggle to attribute a controlled meaning to Duchamp only deepens the ambiguity and poetics of his work. For all that he is overexposed, he remains mysterious and enigmatic. In the mid 1920s, Duchamp famously gave up art to play chess, turning on its head the idea that art and being an artist was a vocation that required the artist's full attention. In fact, maybe it was the creation of this gap that strengthened his grip on our consciousness.

Duchamp represents an inescapable intellectual condition, in which communicative play and unconscious rambling describe reality. He is now publically attributed with getting the ball rolling for the kind of art that is known as conceptual – a strange category, since even conceptual art has to take some sort of thought-free form. Umh... conceptual... I get it! Or is it that I don't, and



Rotor Rings, 2014, by Gavin Turk

that's it. Either way, that 'it' makes for the intellectual point of the work, and unfortunately with Duchamp the point was visual indifference: more of a plastic pun than a record of expression. For me, art challenges perception, so what 'I think I know' is still a resonant and fluid space where 'I know I don't know' or 'I think I don't know' or 'I know I don't think'. All this, even before we get to the ontological problem of being...

Duchamp also represents my first realisation that deep thinking can best be activated through humour. Comedians are often more profound than our philosophers. At least they communicate better, and often the laugh trails off into uncomfortable self-reflection: why did I find that funny? Perhaps Duchamp's humour and his influence on my work could be better described as a form of wit. This is the capacity for inventive thought and quick understanding, coming from the old English word, identifying the mind as the seat

of consciousness. It's not a belly laugh, more a whimsical mental smile like *La Joconde*; being in on the joke, without really quite being able to identify what the joke is.

The archetypal representation of conceptual art is Duchamp's lying-down urinal, *Fountain* (1917). It is commonly perceived to be a flippant comment, an early attempt at shock factor, at saying 'anything can be art.' But it is actually a sophisticated recipe of ingredients in one object: fountain; water; nature; waste; male; rude; base; prostate; whimsy; curvaceous; elegant; comical; cute; decommissioned; useless; vulnerable; porcelain; urinal; vase. It is 'the Buddha of the bathroom'. This is all there if you spend time gazing through the cliché. **✎**

'What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me' is at the Fine Art Society, London, from 10 October–5 November 2014. To find out more go to www.fas-london.com.



THE DIARY

What Duchamp Taught Me, at The Fine Art Society, London

Rotor Rings (2014) by Gavin Turk, part of What Duchamp Taught Me at The Fine Art Society

Picture: courtesy Gavin Turk; photo by Andy Keate

Forty-five leading contemporary artists celebrate the centenary of a ground-breaking Marcel Duchamp exhibit.

FRIDAY, OCT 10- WEDNESDAY, NOV 05

Whether you think the artist Marcel Duchamp was a revolutionary genius or merely the start of the rot, there's no denying his influence. His "readymades" – found objects presented as art – set in motion a debate that's preoccupied the modern art world ever since. Namely, what is art?

This exhibition marks the centenary of the year Duchamp showed his first readymade, "Bottle Rack" (1914), and asks 45 artists to mark the milestone.

The line-up is exceptional, a wide-ranging list of conceptual, figurative and performance artists that includes Turner Prize winners [Martin Creed](#) and [Keith Tyson](#), "YBA" [Gavin Turk](#), [Michael Craig-Martin](#) (some might say father of the YBAs), portrait painter [Jonathan Yeo](#), light artist [Chris Levine](#), rising conceptual artist [Miriam Elia](#) and the ever-brilliant [Cornelia Parker](#).

Among the highlights are Yeo's double portrait of himself and Duchamp; and Tyson's totem pole of 36 heads, which plays with Duchamp's motifs of chess and roulette.

"What Duchamp Taught Me" is on at The Fine Art Society, London. It is the largest contemporary show in the 138-year history of the gallery.

CONTACT

The Fine Art Society
148 New Bond Street
London
W1S 2JT
+44 (0)20 7318 1895
contemporary@faslondon.com
www.whatmarcelduchamptaughtme.com
[Map](#)



Oct
09

What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me, Fine Art Society, New Bond Street, London, until 5 November

The Fine Art Society, established in 1876, will this Friday open a show paying tribute to arguably one of the most influential artists of all time, Marcel Duchamp. The exhibition features 50 artists showing works under the title What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me – which pretty much does what it says on the tin.

Kate Bryan, Director of Contemporary Art at the Fine Art Society said art historians and critics always talked about the legacy of Duchamp, but far less was heard from artists and was struck by how it was always critics, collectors and catalogues that trumpeted Duchamp's influence – not artists themselves.

Kate said: "To understand his legacy, the only thing you can do is ask artists. I strongly believe that every artist working today has had the opportunity to go through a door that Duchamp opened for them: working through problems about the role of the artist, what constitutes art. It's all pretty unanswerable stuff, but it's producing great results – we've got such a tradition of beautifully creative conceptual art in this country."

Duchamp is the father of conceptual art and best known for his readymades, as in the urinal he designated as art in 1917. His first pure readymade was a galvanised bottle rack from 100 years ago.

The artists helping to celebrate this centenary, whose work is spread over all 5 floors of the gallery, include Peter Blake, Keith Tyson, Gavin Turk and Cornelia Parker, who is taking the opportunity to vent her feelings about an incident in 2003 when the string was cut that she had tied around Rodin's *The Kiss* at Tate Britain, for a piece called *The Distance: A Kiss With Added String*. Cornelia Parker has managed to find the string and has made it into a ball around a hidden weapon. "She won't say what it is," said Bryan. "But it is really, really heavy." – hmm that's left culture2vulture wondering what on earth is in there?! – or maybe it's just a brick? – go see for yourself...

Our favourite works include the response by the London based American surrealist Nancy Fouts, who has made subtle interventions in the gallery's first floor, nineteenth century viewing room. Upon first glance the room will appear to display Victorian paintings (there is genuine 19th century stock on the walls) but closer inspection reveals Fouts' surreal 'mockings' – interrupting the solemn silence of the past – which include *Eve an Eve*, *Adam and Adam*, plus a mini suitcase full of pipes – how appropriate.

