

Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism exhibition
Historical Context
Lindsey A. Jochets

The exhibition *Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism* uses the medium of glass as a catalyst to bring together two distinctly different, yet overlapping movements. Dada began during World War I in Zurich Switzerland but spread throughout Europe and America as an absurdist anti-art, anti-war, anti-bourgeois, anti-culture movement. Its motivation stemmed from growing capitalist societies, nationalism, and colonial pursuits, to formulate anti- ideologies, where traditional aesthetics and beauty were forgotten.¹ In 1916 the discussions and performances at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich helped ignite Dada, as well as the 1916 Dada Manifesto's by Hugo Ball and the 1917 Manifesto by Tristan Tzara.² Animosity toward the times was prevalent across Europe and North America, which was documented in literary publications as well as with the emigration and displacement of artists and intellectuals. Dada's byproduct is sensible art with anarchist, revolutionary, offensive, reactionary, destructive, and demoralizing perceptions.

One of the most noted international Dada and Surrealist artists was the French born Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp was influenced by Post Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Futurism, and Symbolism. Duchamp submitted a futuristic cubistic painting titled *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* to the 1913 Armory show in New York. This shocked American audiences and created quite a stir since there was a predisposition to conventional realistic art.³ In 1912, Duchamp began conceiving ideas for his profound *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, *The Large Glass* which was completed in 1923.⁴ Duchamp's spent some time in Germany where he regressed from painting to find enlightenment in scholarly studies and studio experimentation. After being exempt from military service in Paris, Duchamp immigrated to America where he was already well known. Duchamp befriended and converged with avant-garde artists Man Ray, Francis Picabia, Henri-Pierre Roché, Beatrice Wood, as well

as art patrons. They worked together on a Dada magazine *The Blind Man* and the art organization *Société Anonyme*.⁵ It was in 1917 that unbeknownst for the judging committee of the *Society of Independent Artists* exhibition, which Duchamp was a member of, a urinal titled *Fountain* signed R. Mutt a was submitted and declined. It wasn't until after this artwork was submitted under a pseudonym by Marcel Duchamp that it was considered a *pièce de résistance* for both Duchamp and Dada because it was a readymade and its performative antics.⁶ Readymade objects were originally classified as conventional or functional, and were reclassified as art.⁷

Duchamp's spent nearly eleven years constructing his artwork titled *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even, The Large Glass*. The notions of chance and fate are constructed into, and embraced in Duchamp's *Large Glass*. This began with its fabrication when Duchamp would fire match sticks dipped in paint from a toy cannon at the glass to make organic unpredictable markings, all elements of chance. Then after eleven years Duchamp deemed the artwork as indefinitely unfinished, and began to exhibit it. *The Large Glass* broke during shipping, however it was Duchamp's understanding, repair, and acceptance of the breakage as fate that define the work.⁸ The acceptance of the break shows Duchamp's deep understanding and belief in destiny, and that a critical quality of glass is its fragility. Dada is present in the life of *The Large Glass's* which welcomes the absurdness of chance and the readymade qualities found in sheet glass. *The Large Glass* can also be classified as surrealistic too, because it was inspired by a performance of Raymond Roussel's *Impressions d'Afrique*.⁹ Nicholas Jenkins of Stanford University stated Roussel's *Impressions d'Afrique* "is one of the strangest, densest, maddest, most hauntingly beautiful poems of the twentieth century."¹⁰ These poignant aspects and moments in *The Large Glass's* fate characterize it as something physically bound by allegory and destiny.

Spawning from Dada's anti-war, art, culture, and pro-absurdness, Surrealism can be felt in Dada's preformative, nonconventional, openness, and conceptualness. Dada and Surrealism

did overlap and coexisted together, but it was Surrealism that pushed the artist and viewer to investigate their inner subconscious, dreams, and psyche.¹¹ The end of Dada fizzled when people sought more meaningful and productive responses for their discontent, examples being painter Francis Picabia and poet André Breton who is thought to have initiated the Surrealist movement.¹² It was Breton who prompted the theoretical perception of Surrealism with the notions of automatism.¹³ Breton influenced Salvador Dalí, who can be considered one of the most well known and admired Surrealist artists. Dalí is most recognized for his willingness to delve into the human psyche and constructed non-fiction melting into fiction, work ranges from glass, sculpture, painting, theater, and writing. Dalí is most recognized for his dreamlike bizarre paintings, which transcends into his sculpture. Dalí's conceptual non-functional collage *Objet Surréaliste à Fonctionnement Symbolique - Le Soulier de Gala* and *Buste Rétrospectif de Femme* use functional glass. These objects represent everyday objects and images in a dream-like mechanized apparatus and circumstance, too anomalous to translate. The theme and look of glass is present throughout Dalí's paintings, as dripping sky and scenery resembling molten glass, or as purposeful glass such as a drinking glass or hour glass. It was in Dalí's later work with Gianni Tosso and Daum where he fully embraced and encapsulates the material, showing glass as the unifying glue to his methodology. Surrealist objects are meant to make the viewer reconsider what art is, what dreams are, what comes to light from automatism, and how the subconscious could potentially solve problems.

Glass in and of itself is an alluring mystical material both a liquid and a solid, called an amorphous solid.¹⁴ Glass can be attributed to Surrealism because of its interaction with the viewer and performative qualities, like its resonating colors, refractive and reflective qualities, its hot lava-like glowing stages, and the processes used for fabrication. It is glass's association with functional and conventional objects that make it attributable to Dada's readymades. It is also apparent that the sponsoring venues featuring the *Dust to Dada, Sands of Surrealism* exhibit (*The Dalí Theatre and Museum, Figueres Catalonia, Spain* and *The Salvador Dalí*

Museum, Saint Petersburg Florida, United States) fully embrace glass as an architectural medium. The glass used in their architecture transforms the viewer's experience into an enchanting progression and educational encounter. The *Dust to Dada, Sands of Surrealism* exhibit will elaborate on the viewer's experience not only by the transformative environment and artwork, but through narrated tours, hot lampworking demonstrations, children's workshops, and in-depth text. The viewer will fully see how glass is intrinsically predisposed to the Dada and Surrealist movements both as functional non-fiction and fantastical fiction.

Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism exhibition
Object Analysis & Comparison
Lindsey A. Jochets

A dialogue has been created for each object and its grouping in the *Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism* exhibition. This was generated to help educate, and inform the viewer as to what the movements were, and how glass transpired as a catalysis unifying the art throughout Dada and Surrealism as a catalysist unifying the art.

Marcel Duchamp's early Dada objects introduce the *Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism* exhibition. His objects take common everyday objects out of their original associations and give them context either in the form of a narrative, pun, mystery, absurdness, and play.

- As presented in the history context *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* depicts ideas of risk, chance, destiny, and understanding. Duchamp realized this when making of the artwork and later with his acceptance of its fate. *The Large Glass's* spawned by Roussel's tale, creates a narrative both written, mentally, and visually.
- The concept of a narrative carries over to *Duchamp's 50 CC of Paris Air* which displays heavy use of glass and playfulness in Dada philosophies and artistry. Duchamp's *50 CC of Paris Air* was a gift to art patron Walter Arensberg. The lamp worked onion shaped glass was given by Duchamp to Arensberg who was someone who had everything and needed absurdity, cleverness, and pun of Paris air. ¹⁵
- Other objects displayed by Duchamp are his *Fountain* which is Dada's signature practical joke, because it was submitted under a to an alias.
- Marcel Duchamp's *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* display's the common everyday object, a glass thermometer, in an absurd and hilarious context of a bird cage with fake

marble sugar cubes. This reformulates the already established notions of the thermometer, a readymade, in a bizarre setting and joke.

Following Duchamp, the next four objects continue with Dada's notions of the readymade in mixed media, but also show influences of other artistic movements, such as Pablo Picasso is Cubism.

- Sofie Taeube-Arp's *Dada Head* exhibits globalized interpretations of exotic Northwestern and Oceanic natives. This sculpture portrays a cubist profile and portrait composed of a turned wood mannequin, paint, glass beads, and found objects.¹⁶ The three-dimensional object portrays the two-dimensional influences of the cubism and Pablo Picasso.
- The mixed media of readymades is present Man Ray's *Ce qui manque à nous tous*¹⁷ *What is lacking us all?* Man Ray uses a blown glass iridescent white bubble coming out of a readymade pipe. The combination resembling an actual soap or bubble gum floating out of a funny pipe to provoke the imagination and fantasy, from a conceptual toy and prop.
- On an opposite note Man Ray's *Autoportrait* gives off an eerie nightmarish dark quality because it is a head in a box.¹⁸ The portrait depicts a head with glasses stuffed in a wooden box with newspapers. It is the use of eye glasses a common everyday object and readymade, which forces the viewer to reflect why a sculpture or corpse would need glasses?
- The use of glasses is also confronted in Marcel Marien's *L'Introuvable, The Untraceable* where whims of a Cyclops a one-eyed monster are dreamt up. Marien's single lens glasses relates to a monocle set in a frame, and inclusive of two over the ear hinged sides. Marien arouses the mind as well as humor and ridiculousness, seen in glasses practical object but customized in a non-functional way.¹⁹

Surrealism conjured up the depths of the human psyche to release one's own inner monster. Artists and intellectuals were seeking a more meaningful and productive response in art and used glass physically and theoretically throughout their work.

- Salvador Dalí's painting *The Inventions of Monsters* exhibit fantasy and illusion. Colors blend together in the melting background and scenery to resembles molten glass. Glass seen in the form of an hourglass, is painted in the hand of a skeleton.²⁰ This compels the viewer to consider life, death, and time.
- Salvador Dalí's subtly uses glass in the *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on the Beach*. Camouflaged within the detailed background is a white footed dish filled with pears.²¹ This relates to the historical still life painting of fruit in dishes, but Dalí provides a clever and poetic portrayal.
- Surrealism was fueled with the analysis of the dream and subconscious. In Dalí's *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening*, lifelike tigers attack the sleeping female figure.²² This painting is vibrant and startling, but it is the long legged elephant with the pyramid embellishment that later progresses into a physical sculpture with the embodiment of glass.²³

Salvador Dalí's painting spilled off the canvases onto sheets of glass and developed into three-dimensional sculpture. Dalí embraces Surrealism through multi-layers and multi-dimensionality by trying to actualize the imagination by capturing dreams onto the canvas and building the subconscious into sculpture.

- *The Little Theater* by Dalí is composed of eleven layers of painted glass.²⁴ The layers of painted glass cause the theater to have depth and glow.
- The constraints of sticking to one medium were irrelevant to Dalí. Therefore Dalí's *Objet à Fonctionnement Symbolique - Le Soulier de Gala* uses painting, found objects,

construction, mechanization, and the imagination to formulate a three-dimensional collage. There is a dream-like quality to Dalí's apparatus.²⁵

- This idea of a three-dimensional collage carries over to *Buste Rétrospectif de Femme* where glass beads, a baguette, a porcelain female figure painted with ants, corn ears, and gilded metal make one odd assemblage. It is somewhere between familiar and unfamiliar like déjà vu, where the objects are recognizable but the hodgepodge is not.²⁶
- The understanding of the object visually is apparent, but it is the combination, that is peculiar. Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* or *Aphrodisiac Telephone* is a Surrealist readymade. The object radiates oddness with the uncanny blend of things, and exudes sexuality with the notions of an aphrodisiac lobster. Dalí's *Lobster Telephone* was well known therefore many copies were produced including an all white version.²⁷

Surrealism was ignited with the writings of André Breton where, glass is present metaphorically. Breton's poem *Freedom of Love* says "My wife with the hair of a wood fire, with the thoughts of heat lightning, with the waist of an hourglass."²⁸ He poetically uses words, with the comparison of his wife's figure to that of an hourglass to conjure up a vision and emotion. This idea of using glass as physically, theoretically, and emotionally was used by Yves Tanguy and Man Ray.

- André Breton's book *L'Amour Fou, Crazy Love* is encapsulated and altered in Georgia Russell's sculpture. Breton's theories and two-dimensional writings are made physical when Russell ornamentally cuts the book apart into a blooming three-dimensional sculpture.²⁹
- Glass is metaphorically represented present in Yves Tanguy painting both in the wrinkled objects and the title *Through Birds, Through Fire, Not Through Glass*.³⁰ You can see glass in the draped objects, which resemble blown glass affected by gravity such as a handkerchief falseletto form.

- Man Ray's *Glass Tear's* photo uses glass to embody and represent human emotion.³¹ Feeling in the form of tears is a significant part of being human, and exhibit true and raw emotion. It is said that the eyes are the path to the soul, therefore Man Ray's use of glass tears capture this vision.
- The power of passion of lust is apparent in *La Retour à la Rraison*, a film by Man Ray. Glass is present in the form of the projector and seen within the film. Reflections of light off a glass mirror onto a female figure magnify and echo lust.³²

Notions of fantasy worlds, ulterior worlds, mysticism, and satire are apparent in the following Surrealist objects. The artists and viewer are presented with play and fun through the a visual dichotomy.

- Alberto Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 a.m.*³³ resembles a jungle gym architecture, museum, dollhouse, and madhouse. He uses symbolism and minimalism influences with Surrealist play to make a bizarre micro environment.
- Next to Giacometti is Claude Cahun's *Untitled* photo similar with an ulterior world, but also with a trapped essence of time. Spellbound in this glass bubble is the playful constructs of found objects and toys imaginatively displayed. It is like terrarium of amusement.³⁴
- The notion of play and mysticism are in Joseph Cornell's *Talglioni's Jewel Casket*. The casket disassociates itself with death and more with a treasure chest, mystical voodoo box, or Pandora's box.³⁵
- Words, imagery, and materiality meet in René Magritte *Feu-Bouteille, Fire Bottle* a bottle painted with a campfire in scenery.³⁶ Magritte visually and physically actualizes the idea of flames relating to glassblowing folklore. The story goes that Phoenician sailors camped on a beach, and found glass residue in their campfire supposedly created from burning wood and mined cargo on the sand.

Surrealism can remove the associations and functionality inherent in common everyday glass such as a wine glass or a cup. These utilitarian objects gain an alter ego and new context.

- Joseph Cornell's *Untitled* collage is inclusive of a broken wine glass being filled with yellow sand, it abstractly provokes thoughts of time, as well as the perspectives of the glass half-full and the glass half-empty.³⁷
- Conventional glass is represented as an armoire mirror and a wine glass in René Magritte's very realistic *Les Valeurs Personnelles, Personal Values* painting.³⁸ This two-dimensional replica awakens a narrative where the wine glass becomes a character standing proud in the center of the room set-up like a still life.
- Non-fiction is again transformed into fiction where wine, cognac, shot, and martini glasses convert into pawns, kings, and queens in André Breton & Nicholas Calas's *Wine Glass Chess Set from Imagery of Chess*.³⁹ Chess becomes more than a game, but an internal and external, outside versus inside, light versus dark, good versus evil, and drunk versus sober battle. The mirror chess board allows for contemplation and reflection of yourself, your opponent, and your environment.
- Drinking continues in the Dada readymade and Surrealist sculpture by Meret Oppenheim titled *Eichömchen, Squirrel*. This piece literally puts fur on your tongue with the play of a squirrel's hairy tail as the handle for a beer.⁴⁰ This is animal play with a functional everyday beer stein.

These objects illustrate Surrealism's ability to transform the everyday object to thought, emotion, fable, and game.

- Surrealist play with anatomy is demonstrated in Marcel Mariën's *Untitled* photographs which are still lifes.⁴¹ Glass and ceramics in the familiar mirror, tea pot, and wine glass are elegantly displayed with the nude female figure. The use of glass with the body and

dynamic scenery create beauty. These were probably influenced by Man Ray's artwork in by creating a metamorphosis of how the viewer sees and perceives the physical world.

Surrealism remained prevalent throughout Salvador Dalí's career and artwork by remaining bizarre, elegant, and dreamlike. It was Dalí's work with artists, manufacturers, and retailers that helped further his imagination into the world of tangible.

- Salvador Dalí's sculptures specifically those *Untitled Commissions* with Gianni Toso⁴² used hot glass to fully execute his art. The material allowed him to execute a flower growing on an eating utensil.
- Retail editions with Daum allowed Salvador Dalí to take imagery from his paintings and execute them in glass and other mixed materials.⁴³ He created the iconic melting clock, the Venus female figure with drawers, and then neon greenish yellow jugs with flesh tone mustaches.
- The fabricated and designed object *Space Elephant*⁴⁴ is directly taken from Dalí's painting *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening*.⁴⁵ The *Space Elephant* is a tangible elongated legged elephant with a crystal back embellishment. The elephant can be seen as a readymade déjà vu object transposed from Dalí's Surrealist painting.

The progression chronologically from Dada to Surrealism in *Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism* exhibition makes the understanding of the movements, artwork, and artists easier. In conclusion this dialogue about each object and its grouping comparisons was formulated to incite thought and inspiration. Dada and Surrealism uses glass as a catalyst, but it is through this exhibition that you can see how glass unifies and further explains these movements. These objects awakening emotion, create play, insight the inner psyche, subconscious, imagination, sexuality, absurdness, to generate humor in art.

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Dust of Dada, Sands of Surrealism

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Lindsey A. Jochets

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