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See table of contents

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In her 1968 essay on the Museum of Modern Art's *Dada and Surrealism* exhibition, Lucy Lippard lamented the fact that no in-depth survey devoted exclusively to Dada had ever taken place in the United States. Now, after a period of time lasting nearly four decades, that day finally arrived. Organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art in New York, DADA (February 19–May 14, 2006) proved to be one of the highlights of the capital's spring exhibition season. Subdivided according to the cities of Zurich, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover, New York and Paris, the six centres in which Dada took place, the subject matter of the exhibition ranged from the primitive masks to Hannah Hoech's image of politicians in bathing suits to aural abstractions by Kurt Schwitters. In addition to work by the movement's major figures, the exhibition included several artists who made by the sculptural works in the exhibition, the presentation is the coincidence of the Broken Arm all exist as reconstructions can be found throughout the show. The 1988 reconstruction of the original 1920 version of George Grosz and John Heartfield's *The Middle-Class Philistine* (1920, Electro Mechanical Tatlin Sculpture) and the 2004 remaking of John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter's *Prussian Archangel*, also originally from 1920, account for their unusually pristine condition. In a much more theatrical vein, a large photograph of Schwitters' Merzbau resides within a recasting of his famous three-dimensional collage. Harboured in an alcove, it contrasts with the avant-garde character of most Dada works. The unadorned surfaces and neutral tones of this contrived manifestation point back in time by conveying a decidedly Gothic impression.

The presence of such renewals and enhancements creates a
variety of effects. While many artists over time have produced multiple versions of key pieces, the presence of original works, artist built replicas, artist sanctioned replicas, and professional reconstructions as seen here forces the viewer to consider the authenticity of the art work, the inherent merit of these various forms and the perspectives from which these different kinds of objects should or should not be viewed. For the average museum goer the initial sense of excitement created by the startling phenomenon that is Dada would be deflated as he or she experiences some disappointment with the idea of viewing replacements. It forces one to consider the overarching purpose of the exhibition, the nature of the movement being surveyed, the possible modes of presentation as well as one’s personal definition with regard to what can be accepted as art.

In the long run such wrinkles make DADA that much more interesting. The vigour of these works and the fact that they still present challenges to the viewer speaks of the importance and originality of these artists’ achievements. One unwritten subtext to the exhibition is that, in light of the current situation in Iraq, the moral outrage expressed at the destructive effects of war still rings true. Most importantly, though, in every gallery the viewer sees evidence of the movement’s tremendous impact on later art. Duchamp’s _Rotary Demisphere (Precision Optics)_ (1924) points to Kinetic Art and the Op-Art works of painters such as Bridget Riley. Taeuber’s containers suggest Tony Cragg’s vessel sculptures and the stacked cones of her marionette Dr. Komplex re-emerge in General Idea’s ‘skiing Venetian Blind’ costume at Lake Louise, Alberta in 1977. The spirit of Man Ray’s coat hangers also live on in Dan Steinhilber’s _Untitled_ (2002), a dense floor to ceiling column assembled from paper-clad wire hangers now in the collection of the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum just across the National Mall. In summation, this outstanding revaluation of Dada’s contribution to the historical avant-garde produced many more revelations than would have been expected.
