
Introduction to the First International Dada Fair

Author(s): Wieland Herzfelde and Brigid Doherty

Source: *October*, Vol. 105, Dada (Summer, 2003), pp. 93-104

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3397683>

Accessed: 28/09/2010 04:21

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=mitpress>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The MIT Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *October*.

Introduction to the First International Dada Fair*

WIELAND HERZFELDE

Translated and introduced by Brigid Doherty

Printed in red-and-black typography over a photolithographic reproduction of John Heartfield's montage *Life and Activity in Universal City at 12:05 in the Afternoon*, the newspaper-sized cover page of the catalog to the First International Dada Fair—an “exhibition and sale” of roughly two hundred “Dadaist products” that was held from June 30 to August 25, 1920, in a Berlin art gallery owned by Dr. Otto Burchard, an expert in Song period Chinese ceramics who underwrote the show with an investment of one thousand marks and thereby earned the title “Financedada”—asserts that “the Dada movement leads to the sublation of the art trade.”¹ *Aufhebung* is the Dadaists' word for what their movement does to the traffic in art, and the cover page evokes the trebled meaning that can be attached to that term: the Dada Fair “maintained” the art trade to the extent that it put Dadaist products on the market; at the same time, and indeed thereby, the exhibition aimed to generate within the walls of a well-situated Berlin art gallery an affront to public taste that would “eradicate” the market into which its products were launched, as if, again thereby, to “elevate” the enterprise of dealing in works of art in the first place. Organized by George Grosz, who is given the military rank “Marshall” on the cover page, Raoul Hausmann, “Dadasopher,” and Heartfield, “Monteurdada,” the Dada Fair failed as a commercial venture. Despite charging a considerable admission fee of three marks thirty (a sum even higher than the catalog announces), while asking an additional one mark seventy for the catalog, which was published three weeks into the run of the show, the Dadaists could not bring in enough from sales to turn a profit. (Ticket number 310 was sold on July 16, number 389 on August 4.)² Portfolios of reproductive graphic works, including a set of ten lithographs by Grosz titled *Gott mit uns* (God with Us) (Berlin: Malik-

* My thanks to Michael W. Jennings for his helpful comments on a draft of this translation.

1. On the Dada Fair, see Helen Adkins, “Erste Internationale Dada-Messe,” in *Stationen der Moderne: Die bedeutenden Kunstaustellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1988), pp. 157–83, and Hanne Bergius, *Montage und Metamechanik: Dada Berlin—Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2000), pp. 233–304, 349–414.

2. See Bergius, *Montage*, p. 289.

Verlag, 1919), were available for viewing and for purchase at a table in the gallery, but there is no evidence that any of the other exhibited objects were sold in conjunction with their display at the Dada Fair. (A single work is marked “sold” in the catalog; originally titled, in English, *High School Course in Dada*, it was made by Grosz’s brother-in-law Otto Schmalhausen, and is now lost.)

Not only did the Dada Fair draw a smaller ticket-buying audience than its organizers had hoped, it ended up costing Grosz and the poet Wieland Herzfelde—Heartfield’s younger brother, founder of the Malik-Verlag publishing house, and author of the exhibition catalog to the Dada Fair—nine hundred marks in fines as a result of their conviction at trial in April 1921 on charges of having slandered the German military by putting *Gott mit uns* on public view.³ When Heartfield included the boldfaced typeset question “Have you already been shown George Grosz’s new portfolio *Gott mit uns*?” in the space surrounding Herzfelde’s introductory text in the exhibition catalog, he may have intended the question provocatively, in ironic imitation of the tone and typography of commercial advertisements. And if he did not envision a response that eventually would include the Berlin police department’s seizure from the Malik-Verlag’s offices of copies of *Gott mit uns* as well as seven original drawings by Grosz, Heartfield was certainly accustomed to seeing Berlin Dada publications banned, as they had been regularly since 1917. Nonetheless, when inviting readers of the catalog to “take note of the many Dada publications of the Malik-Verlag on the book table,” Heartfield and the other Dadaists could hardly have anticipated the successful legal prosecution of the artist and publisher of *Gott mit uns*, and the subsequent confiscation and destruction of the portfolio’s original plates.

More successful than the Berlin Dadaists’ attempts to turn a profit (or at least recoup investments in the exhibition) were their efforts to generate publicity for the Dada Fair in the German and international print media. They hired a professional photographer from one of Berlin’s most prominent agencies to document the show’s opening, and photographs of the Dada Fair were in fact reproduced in illustrated weeklies as far away as Amsterdam, Milan, Rome, and Boston. The Dada Fair also received dozens of published reviews, both in Germany and abroad. Most of those reviews were hostile, a good number venomously so; some journalists seemed merely bemused; and the few critics who argued for the significance of the exhibition, including Adolf Behne, Lu Märten, and Kurt Tucholsky, did so ambivalently. Whatever their assessment of its merits, newspapers all over the world devoted coverage of one kind or another to the Dada Fair, with articles appearing, for example, in Prague, Paris, Milan, London, New York, Buenos Aires, and El Paso, Texas.

A note appended to the catalog’s list of works by Hans Arp, Johannes Baader, Johannes Theodor Baargeld, Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Grosz, Hausmann, Heartfield,

3. See Bergius, *Montage*, pp. 293–96, and Rosamunde Neugebauer, *George Grosz: Macht und Ohnmacht satirischer Kunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1993), pp. 73–78.

Hannah Höch, Francis Picabia, Rudolf Schlichter, Schmalhausen, Georg Scholz, and others (including the American journalist, honorary Dadaist, and future Hollywood screenwriter Ben Hecht, who was based as a foreign correspondent in post–World War I Berlin, and the teenagers Hans Citroën, younger brother of the Dutch artist Paul Citroën, and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, at the time a fledgling composer and music critic who collaborated in the planning of Dada revues and later a student of Arnold Schoenberg and a distinguished scholar of twentieth-century music) indicates that roughly fifty of those works were subsequently scheduled to be included in the “First Exhibition of Modern Art” of the “Société Anonyme, Inc., 19 East 47th Street, New York” as “the first German Dada works to be shown in America.” The first exhibition of the Société Anonyme, Inc. had in fact already taken place in April 1920, under the direction of Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray. Dreier, however, did undertake plans for a Dada exhibition to include works from Berlin after visiting the Dada Fair on the recommendation of Cologne Dadaist Ernst, with whom she had been in contact since October 1919.⁴ The possibility that works from the Dada Fair might be exhibited in the United States aroused the interest of the German government’s Ministry of the Exterior, which undertook to assess the effects such an exhibition might have on American perceptions of the young German republic; a copy of the catalog to the Dada Fair with handwritten marks highlighting the notice of the planned exhibition in New York can still be found in the Ministry’s files in the German National Archives.⁵

A translation of Herzfelde’s “Introduction to the Dada Fair” is accompanied on the following pages by four illustrations with long captions taken from the

4. See Bergius, *Montage*, pp. 285–87.

5. Bundesarchiv, Potsdam: Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, 919/1 “Ausstellungspropaganda.”



First International Dada Fair, Berlin, 1920. Photo courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

final section of Herzfelde's text, which contains glosses on 14 of the exhibited works, the majority of which are now lost, among them Heartfield's *Life and Activity in Universal City at 12:05 in the Afternoon*. Along with those glosses, the catalog incorporates a list of titles of 174 works, including the 14 discussed in some detail by Herzfelde. Exhibition reviews as well as statements by the artists involved indicate that a number of works that were shown at the Dada Fair do not appear in the catalog; hence I say above that the exhibition contained roughly two hundred works. In addition to the Heartfield montage reproduced on the cover, three photolithographic illustrations appear in the catalog. Gerhard Preiss, the so-called "Super-Musicdada" who died in late 1919, performs his "Dadaist Wooden-Puppet-Dance" on the back cover, while each interior page displays a collaborative montage by Grosz and Heartfield that belongs to a group of so-called "Corrected Masterpieces." The first of the corrected masterpieces, *Pablo Picasso: La Vie Heureuse (Dedicated to Dr. Karl Einstein)* (1920), shows a photographic portrait of a German World War I soldier mounted on top of a reproduction of Picasso's *Head of a Girl* (1914), while the second, *Henri Rousseau: Self-Portrait* (1920), substitutes Hausmann's face for Rousseau's own.

Herzfelde's text is mostly printed in columns that run from top to bottom, parallel to the shorter side of the page (in contradistinction, that is to say, to the conventional layout of the newspapers whose size and format the catalog's paper evokes). On the first inside page, a one-paragraph text by Hausmann, "What Art Criticism Will Have to Say About the Dada Exhibition, According to the Dadasopher," is set perpendicular to the first column of Herzfelde's introduction, and the final four glosses also appear in columns oriented in opposition to the main text. Throughout the catalog, lines of boldfaced type appear outside the bounds of the main texts, and the range of orientations in which they are laid out compels readers to turn the catalog around 360 degrees in order to take in all its material. For example, the back cover juxtaposes the assertion "Sport lives on eternally in Potsdam," which is printed in black type running down from left to right in two diagonal lines next to the image of the dancing Super-Musicdada in his black bowler hat and red unitard, with the title of Hausmann's comic sketch, "Victory, Triumph, Tobacco with Beans," which runs upward between two columns of text and is printed in the red ink of Preiss's costume and of the seven small bicycles that have been superimposed in various orientations on top of the list of exhibited works (riding north, south, east, and west—sometimes, given the constraints of the printing process, upside down). Beneath the exhibition's title on the front cover, a more substantial statement by Hausmann also appears upside down: "The Dadaistic person is the radical opponent of exploitation; the logic of exploitation creates nothing but fools, and the Dadaistic person hates stupidity and loves nonsense! Thus the Dadaistic person shows himself to be truly real, as opposed to the stinking hypocrisy of the patriarch and capitalist perishing in his armchair." Hausmann's statement exemplifies the nonsense for which it professes affection, and the inverted layout of his phrases insists that our mode of

reading should become physically dynamic; to see what he has to say, we must turn the page around in our hands, or adapt our eyes and minds to reading upside-down. It might be said that in setting out to make us experience reading as a bodily activity, the catalog attempts to actualize a way of being “truly real” (*wahrhaftig real*) that is opposed to the “stinking hypocrisy of the patriarch and capitalist” because it assumes a physical posture unlike that of the bourgeois reading his newspaper while “perishing in his armchair.”

On the catalog’s first inside page, the exclamation “Max Liebermann illustrates the Bible!” leads the reader’s eye to the title of Herzfelde’s text (“Zur Einführung”), juxtaposing the painter’s grandiose task with the Dadaist’s programmatic statements. The introduction begins with three epigraphs, the first drawn from an essay on photography published in 1855 by the Belgian painter Antoine Wiertz, in which the passage that most closely resembles Herzfelde’s epigraph reads: “Cette machine, avant un siècle, sera le pinceau, la palette, les couleurs, l’adresse, l’habitude, la patience, le coup d’oeil, la touche, la pâte, le glacis, la *ficelle*, le modelé, le fini, le rendu” (This machine, a century hence, will be the brush, the palette, the colors, the craft, the practice, the patience, the glance, the touch, the paste, the glaze, the *trick*, the relief, the finish, the rendering).⁶ Wiertz’s prognostication, that in the twentieth century, photography, which he calls “this machine,” will encompass, indeed “will be,” the elements of the art of painting (from its palette to its patience), becomes in Herzfelde’s translation the more aggressive assertion that photography “will suppress and supplant the entire art of painting.” Wiertz’s idiosyncratic, lilting list becomes Herzfelde’s blunt, all-but-redundant anticipation of photography’s displacement of painting, in which the latter gets both suppressed (*verdrängen*) and supplanted (*ersetzen*); indeed Herzfelde’s terms for what photography will do to painting in effect double its suppression, since *verdrängen* itself does all the work of moving painting out of the way to make room for photography, while *ersetzen* similarly describes a complete action of dis- and replacement. The operations of the translated Wiertz epigraph typify Herzfelde’s prose throughout the introduction, in which the Dadaist’s language often functions as if mechanically, taking its place as one among a number of apparatuses for the destruction of what Herzfelde calls “the cult of art.” The Dadaist, he says, aims neither to compete with photography nor to “breathe a soul” into the photographic apparatus, but instead seeks to incorporate that medium’s technologies and effects, above all those of the cinema, into the production of works that set aside an “aspiration to art” in the service of an obligation to make “what is happening here and now” their content.

The journal of nineteenth-century French painter Eugène Delacroix serves as the source for the second epigraph. As with the Wiertz citation, the lines

6. Antoine Wiertz, “La Photographie,” *Oeuvres littéraires* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1870), p. 309. English translation by Kevin McLaughlin of Walter Benjamin’s citation of Wiertz’s original French, in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. and trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 671.

Herzfelde attributes to Delacroix do not offer a literal translation of the original, which reads: “En vérité, qu’un un homme de génie se serve du daguerréotype comme il faut s’en servir, et il s’élèvera à un hauteur que nous ne connaissons pas” (In truth, if a man of genius makes use of the daguerreotype as it should be used, he will rise to heights that we do not know).⁷ In this case the change is plain, a simple excision: Herzfelde eliminates the “man of genius” from the scene and replaces him with an “artist” of unspecified stature and talent, thereby extending photography’s potential transformation of art across the broader spectrum of its production. Photographs thus emerge in the introduction as objects to be made (like Heartfield’s innovative, poster-sized Dadaphotos at the Dada Fair, which achieve the grand scale Wiertz envisioned in his 1855 essay as crucial to the aesthetic and technological development of the medium) or otherwise appropriated (as in the many montages on display) by both the Dadaists and “the mass of human beings.” “Any product,” Herzfelde explains, “that is manufactured uninfluenced and unencumbered by public authorities and concepts of value is in and of itself Dadaistic, as long as the means of presentation are anti-illusion-

7. Eugène Delacroix, *Journal 1822–1863*, ed. Régis Labourdette, preface Hubert Damisch, intro. André Joubin (Paris: Plon, 1996), p. 350. English translation by Michelle Hannoosh in *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 85.



First International Dada Fair, Berlin, 1920. Photo courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin.

istic and proceed from the requirement to further the disfiguration of the contemporary world.”

The third epigraph presents Herzfelde citing Herzfelde in a final introductory statement that acknowledges the lasting presence of objects of lyric contemplation in the natural world (“sun, moon, and stars abide”) at the same time as it announces that “we no longer worship them.” Thus for Herzfelde, “if immortal art exists, it cannot die merely because the cult of art gets destroyed.” This last epigraph leaves open the question of whether “immortal art” does indeed exist, and it is tempting to assume that any invocation of art, to say nothing of immortal art, is bound in the context of Berlin Dada to be sardonic. Indeed Herzfelde’s introduction establishes the Dadaists as “the vanguard of dilettantism,” radical opponents of the veneration and emulation of “works whose conditions of possibility lie centuries and millennia in the past.” But for Herzfelde “the art dilettante is nothing but the victim of a prejudicial, supercilious, and aristocratic worldview,” and there is a sense in which his introduction makes the case not only for the Dadaists’ destruction of the cult of art, but also for their invention of a new kind of artistic production that refuses to “emancipate itself from reality” or to “disavow the actual,” a new art, or at least a new way of making pictures, that seeks to intensify “the pleasure of the broad masses in constructive, creative activity [*gestaltende Beschäftigung*],” for example by taking “the illustrated newspaper and the editorials of the press as [its] source.” Montage is the technique the Berlin Dadaists deployed in their efforts to transform the production and reception of works of art. As a “capitulation to cinema” and a way of making objects that engage “reality” and “the actual” through “means of presentation [that] are anti-illusionistic,” montage connects Berlin Dada agonistically to traditions of painting and, at the same time, structures its destruction of the cult of art. The affirmative attitude toward the production of a new kind of art that Herzfelde adopts in his “Introduction to the Dada Fair” represents a position the Berlin Dadaists did not hold for long. In September 1920, Grosz, Hausmann, Heartfield, and Schlichter renounced in their manifesto “The Rules of Painting” the principles of montage on which Herzfelde’s conception of Dadaist pictures rested.⁸

8. See Raoul Hausmann, Rudolf Schlichter, George Grosz, and John Heartfield, “Die Gesetze der Malerei,” a manifesto published posthumously in Cornelia Thater-Schulz, ed., *Hannah Höch: Eine Lebenscollage* (Berlin: Argon, 1989), vol. 1, part 2, pp. 696–98.



Cover page of exhibition catalog,
First International Dada Fair
(Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1920).

Photo courtesy of Berlinische
Galerie, Landesmuseum für
moderne Kunst, Photographie und
Architektur, Berlin.

*One day photography will suppress and
supplant the entire art of painting.*

—Wiertz.

*When an artist puts photography to the use it
ought to be put, he will rise to heights of which
we have no conception.*

—Delacroix.

*Sun, moon, and stars abide—although we no
longer worship them. If immortal art exists,
it cannot die because the cult of art gets
destroyed.*

—Wieland Herzfelde.

Painting once had the explicit aim of providing people with a view of things—landscapes, animals, buildings, and so forth—that they could not come to know with their own eyes. Today this task has been taken over by photography and film, which accomplish it incomparably better and more completely than painters of any era.

Yet painting did not die with the loss of its objective, but instead sought new ones. Since then, all aspirations to art, no matter how various they may be, can be grouped together insofar as they have in common a tendency to emancipate themselves from reality.

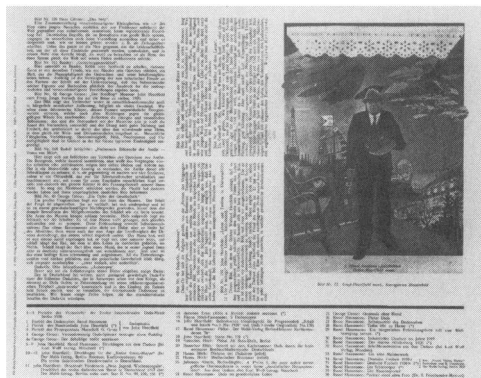
Dadaism is the reaction against all those attempts to disavow the actual that

were the driving force of the Impressionists, Expressionists, Cubists, and Futurists (the latter included because they did not want to capitulate to the cinema); but the Dadaist does not undertake, once again, to compete with the photographic apparatus, let alone to breathe a soul into the apparatus by favoring (like the Impressionists) the worst lens of all: the human eye, or turning the camera around (like the Expressionists) and endlessly presenting nothing but the world within their own breasts.

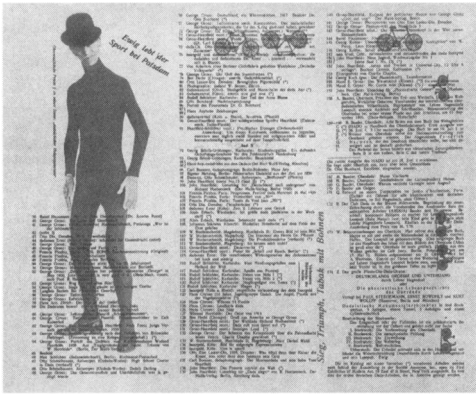
The Dadaists say: When in the past colossal quantities of time, love, and effort were directed toward the painting of a body, a flower, a hat, a heavy shadow, and so forth, now we need merely to take scissors and cut out all that we require from paintings and photographic representations of these things; when something on a smaller scale is involved, we do not need representations at all but take instead the objects themselves, for example, pocketknives, ashtrays, books, etc., all things that, in the museums of old art, have been painted very beautifully indeed, but have been, nonetheless, merely painted.

Now the famous question: Yes, but the content, the spiritual?

Throughout the centuries, the unequal distribution of opportunities for living and developing has produced in the realm of art, as in all other spheres, scandalous circumstances: On the one side a clique of so-called experts and talents that, in part through decades of training, in part through patronage and doggedness, in part through inherited specialized abilities, has monopolized all matters of valuation in art; while on the other side, the mass of human beings with their modest and naive need to represent, communicate, and constructively transform the idea within themselves and the goings-on in the world around them, has been suppressed by the clique of trendsetters. Today the young person, unless he is willing to forego all training and broadening of his native abilities, must submit to the thoroughly authoritarian system of art education and of the public judgment of art. The Dadaists, by contrast, are saying that making pictures is not important, but that when it happens at least no position of power should thereby be established; the professional arrogance of a haughty guild should not spoil the pleasure of the broad masses in constructive, creative activity. For that reason, the contents and, likewise, the media of Dadaist pictures and products can be extraordinarily varied. Any



*Exhibition catalog, First International Dada Fair. 1920.
Photos courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für
moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin.*



product that is manufactured uninfluenced and unencumbered by public authorities and concepts of value is in and of itself Dadaistic, as long as the means of presentation are anti-illusionistic and proceed from the requirement to further the disfiguration of the contemporary world, which already finds itself in a state of disintegration, of metamorphosis. The past remains important and authoritative only to the extent that its cult must be combated. The Dadaists are of one mind: they say that the works of antiquity, the classical age, and all the “great minds” must not be evaluated (unless in a scientifically historical manner) with regard to the age in which they were created, but as if someone made those things today, and no one will doubt that today not a single person, even if he were, to use the jargon of art, a genius, could produce works whose conditions of possibility lie centuries and millennia in the past. The Dadaists consider it a service to be the vanguard of dilettantism; for the art dilettante is nothing but the victim of a prejudicial, supercilious, and aristocratic worldview. The Dadaists acknowledge as their sole program the obligation to make what is happening here and now—temporally as well as spatially—the content of their pictures, which is why they do not consider *A Thousand and One Nights* or “Views of Indochina” but rather the illustrated newspaper and the editorials of the press as the source of their production.

Let us look at some pictures from this point of view.



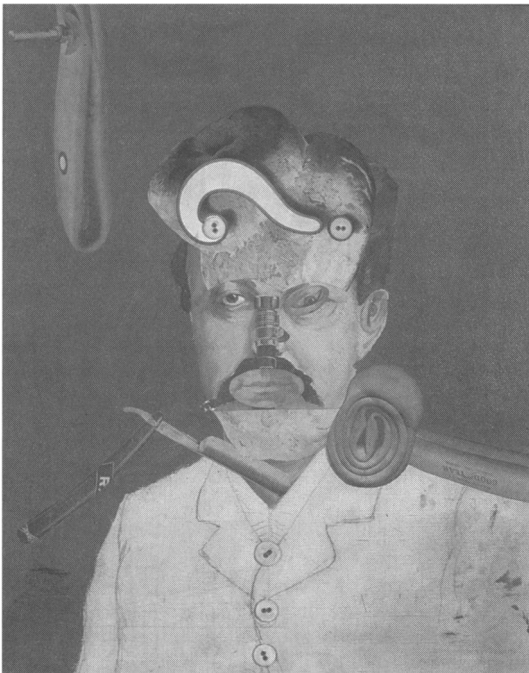
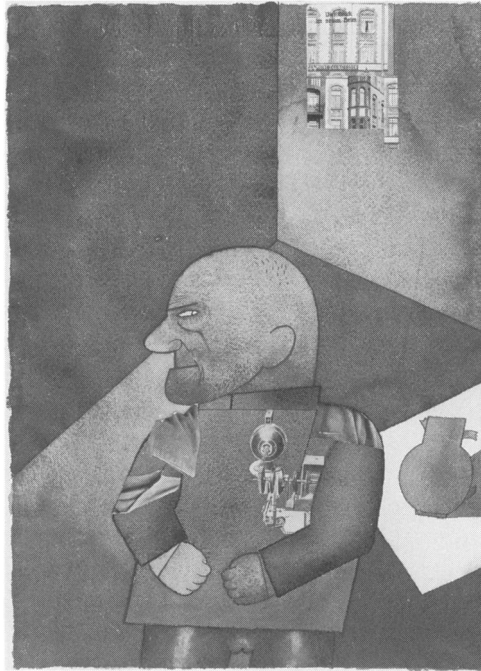
Picture No. 52. George Grosz. “Daum” marries her pedantic automaton “George” in May 1920, John Heartfield is very glad of it. (Meta-Mech. constr. after Prof. R. Hausmann.)

The title is rendered in English, because it has to do with intimate things that not everyone should understand. Grosz marries! For him, however, marriage is not just a personal, but above all a social, event. A concession to a society that's like a machine unflinchingly incorporating men into itself, making them into little machines within the great gear-works; so that marriage actually means a turning away from the bride in the interest of the general public. Simultaneously a turning away from eroticism and sexuality. It's different for the woman. For her, marriage stands everything on its head. If the symbol of the virginal young girl is a naked figure hiding her private parts with her hand or with some little triangle of fabric, then in marriage this disavowal of the sexual needs is emphatically renounced, and yet nonetheless emphasized. From the first hour of their union it falls like a shadow between husband and wife, that in the very moment when the woman is allowed to announce all her secret desires, to expose her body—the man turns to other sober-pedantic calculating tasks. She is almost stunned, and only with nervous aversion touches the head of her mate, as if it were a dangerous apparatus. At the same time, Grosz shows in this picture how marriage encapsulates human beings, so that their contemporaries continue to exist only outside the window, and the image of woman, originally at the center of the man's imagination, is now displaced to the furthest corner of his consciousness.

Top: Exhibition catalog, First International Dada Fair. 1920. Bottom: George Grosz. “Daum” marries her pedantic automaton “George” in May 1920, John Heartfield is very glad of it. (Meta-Mech. constr. after Prof. R. Hausmann.) 1920. © Estate of George Grosz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Photos courtesy of Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin.

Picture No. 62. George Grosz. "The Convict" Monteur John Heartfield After Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up on His Feet. 1920.

The picture shows the criminal in neither a human-sentimental nor a middle-class-moralizing version, but merely as a living creature. We see a deformed body, whose forms bespeak uncommon reserves of energy, which swell up in every direction against those indifferent walls. Beyond this the sole and material reflections: the intimate knowledge of the machine (which indeed is an element of the art of the criminal) and the obsession with good food and freedom, symbolized by the new home dangling above him, which incorporates a wine and delicatessen shop. Human talents, bitterness, disillusionment, envy, pessimism, and stubbornness are marked in the face with a clarity typical of Grosz.

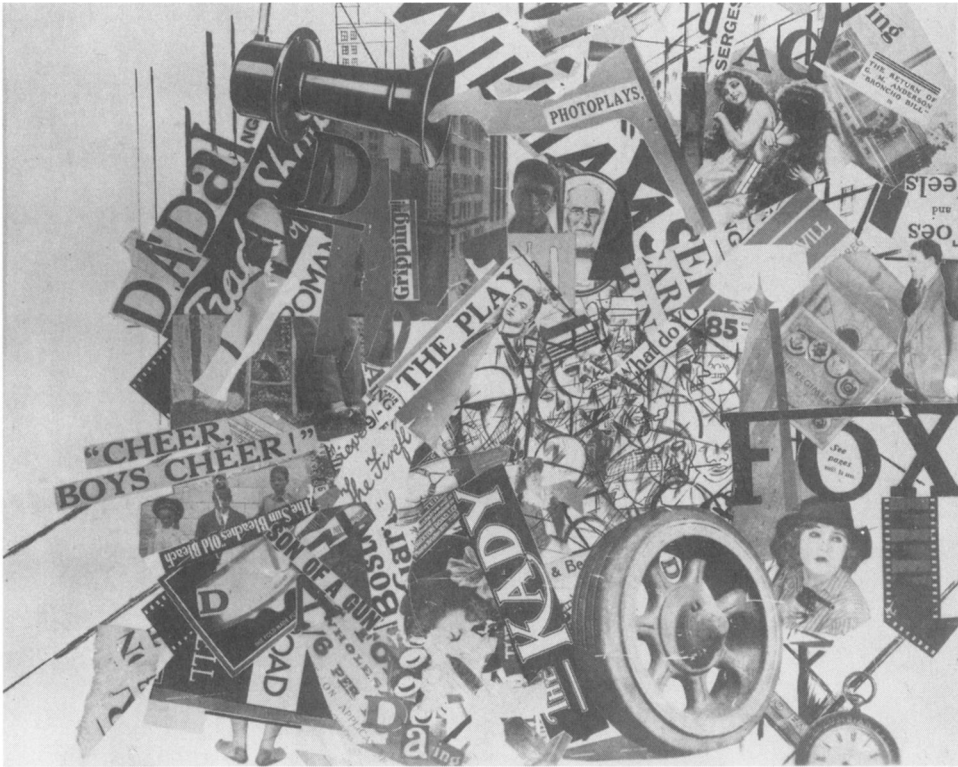


Picture No. 40. George Grosz. "A Victim of Society."

There is a large question mark on the man's forehead. The content of the question has died away. The question has faded, has laid itself to rest and thereby has become a habitual incomprehension behind which the dull consciousness of its own deformity weighs on the skull like a stone. The man's arms hang down limply. An inner-tube rests half-unrolled on the shoulder: the man has not succeeded in unrolling it fully and pumping it up. This disappointment arouses his suicidal intentions: the open razor is close at his throat, but its deployment remains merely an intention, for if the wretchedness of existence permeates one eye, the other still squints around anxiously. The man lives just because at some point he happened to begin doing so; in vain he asks himself why, and the tire with which he had thought to hasten through life dangles limply into nothingness. Limply too dangles the mustache above a mouth that in its youth (one sees it clearly) was enterprising and decisive. Now, however, the once strong chin is spongy and bloated. All efforts at development have come to a standstill, and there remains only the pedantic habit of carefully buttoning oneself up—"homely indeed, but well kept."

Top: Grosz. "The Convict" Monteur John Heartfield After Franz Jung's Attempt to Get Him Up on His Feet. 1920. [The Engineer Heartfield]. 1920. Photo © 1997 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Bottom: Grosz. A Victim of Society [Remember Uncle August, the Unhappy Inventor]. 1919. Photo © Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY. © Estate of George Grosz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



Picture No. 152. John Heartfield. "Life and Activity in Universal City at 12:05 in the Afternoon."

This picture, for which the poet Wieland Herzfelde proclaims his special fondness, describes with the means of film the life and activity in Universal City. This is not a Futurist picture; it is, namely, a Dadaist picture, and indeed an excellent one. In order to arrive at a proper overall impression it is best to step back 40 paces through the wall. (Attention: Watch out for the Stairs!) It follows, then, that the Dadaist John Heartfield is the enemy of the picture. In fact he destroyed it himself. A very simple and useful test of this can be performed on any street with ordinary street lamps.

John Heartfield. Life and Activity in Universal City at 12:05 in the Afternoon. 1920. Present location unknown. © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.