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## Radio DADA

Many, many of our great, and not so great cultural pioneers have channelled its revolutionary and often paradoxical attitude.

1.04

Make one tuna fish sandwich and eat.

1:31

insects for blood well borne bodies of arch angels.

2

Speaker 2

1:35

It's so amazing thrillingly negative.

1

Speaker 1

1:47

That was the montage. The Dada is light though, they like cutting things up, using what was around, da da da da da. I must have first heard about them at art school, not much but not enough to know the dada was a load of strange disturbing nonsense -which apparently was entirely the point. In 100 years since Dada was born in a cabaret at Zurich, many of our great and not so great cultural pioneers have channelled its revolutionary and often paradoxical attitude. Yeah, the disease is now under control. I've been taking part in strange disturbing nonsense myself ever since I was the original compare at the Comedy Store in London, in the late 70s, and part of the original alternative cabaret movement. Gigs in strange locations where the performers ended their acts by throwing darts at the audience or screaming and yelling at them or attempting to take them hostage waving guns around. All this, a long way from the cosy friendly racist light entertainment that was prevalent back then. We thought we were being entirely original and new, but nothing is entirely original and new, and dada had already given us 60 years before contradictions and blurred lines, absurd comedy that's making a serious point, political statements cast as humour, art that's funny, music that's shocking. The word Dada is often used quite loosely today when describing art, that's provocative in some way. But what was Dada and was it really possible to talk about a Dada tradition when Dada itself was anti culture and anti-tradition has

now become our tradition, how can you be anti the anti-tradition, without being traditional,

3:56

In the traditional sense that is.

3:57

3

Speaker 3

3:58

Aleksei- Don't imagine that there are any systems that make sense, it's all completely incomprehensible you stupid old- coasts drunk on energy, we dig the trident in unsuspecting flesh. Dada Tristan – We are downpour maledictions as tropically abundant as vertiginous vegetation.

4

Speaker 4

4:20

Co-founder Dada in Zurich 1916, editor of the magazines Cabaret Voltaire and Dada co-founder of Paris Dada.

“resin and laying in our sweat, we bleed and burn with thirst, our blood is bigger”

4:35

This is another montage. Better to get used to them.

5

Speaker 5

4:41

Dada began essentially, out of an atrocity of the first world war. I'm Jessica Lack, and I'm a freelance arts writer. It was a kind of searing response to what happens when the world goes mad, when everything is so horrendous, and hundreds of thousands of people are gunned down by machines. How do you respond to that?

1

Speaker 1

5:04

They were immigrants from Germany.

5:08

from Romania, Tzara,

3

Speaker 3

5:10

These people were very profound pacifists, they didn't want to be involved in the war, they had political disagreements, they wanted to get out basically and Zurich offered that neutral territory in which they could sort of develop their own artistic practices. I'm David Hopkins, I'm professor of Art History at the University of Glasgow. I think there is a much, much deeper sort of anarchic strain in Tzara, than there was in several of the other participants in Zurich Dada. And in a way this is communicated by his 1918 manifesto which was something he performed at one of the Dada cabarets. "Dada's the chaos from which 1000 orders rise and intertwine and devour one another, to become Dada again. Dada is the course and the content of the entire world's process at the same time". It was a reaction to this bourgeois takeover of the social apparatus, like Friedman I organized one dada, the world's first festival of Dadaism. "Knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shame they make sex uncomfortable compromising good manners, dada" and the idea that this way of thinking about life, about society, about the world has brought human beings to the precipice that was signified by the First World War. "Abolition of logics, which is the dance of those impotent to create dada of every social hierarchy and equation set up for the sake of values by our valets, Dada." And so, the cleanest break, they could envisage was to rebel against anything that smacked the bourgeoisie, "Dada abolition of memory Dada abolition of archaeology, Data abolition of profits to spit out disagree or amorous ideas like a luminous waterfall, with the same intensity in the thicket of one's soul pure of insects for blood well borne and gilded with bodies of archangels, freedom

6

Speaker 6

7:00

dada, dada, dada, a roaring of tense colours.

3

Speaker 3

7:05

interlacing of opposites and all contradictions

7:10

Grotesques, inconsistencies.

7:25

When I was at art school from 1971 to 1974.

1

Speaker 1

7:29

We would attend lectures about surrealism dada, but I think we absorbed it really more from the contemporary stuff that was around, I mean me and a mate did a performance, which was actually mocking performance art, it was called 'feeling deeply committed'. I remember we sat in, I think in the lobby of Chelsea for like four days just sitting there feeling deeply committed and we had a manifesto that was the League of anti-painters or something, smash the bloody paint brush and squeeze the bloody tubes. That was our manifesto. We were mocking the po-facedness of how art was looked at. We saw a load of performance art and we were encouraged to relate to it, but it was really funny but you weren't allowed to laugh at it. There was a group that I remember came a lot to my Chelsea studio called reindeer, people used to say about reindeer, that they were really popular in Poland, which of course at the time were in the Soviet sphere influence and I could never figure out whether that was a good thing or a bad thing whether this performance art was being used as a pay for people who've done well under communism, or whether it was actually a punishment. If you displayed boys who had tendencies or hadn't kept up -to quote 'with the chapter factory', you'd be sent to watch four hours of a man, tying himself up with splints, and then trying to pour a cup of tea all over himself and you weren't allowed to laugh what you're supposed to say is "I see this is a kind of swinging critique of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian empire."

4

Speaker 4

9:08

I declare that Tristan Tzara found the word Dada on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1916 at 6pm. John Hans founded Dada in Zurich together with Hugo Ball, which in is in fact Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara in 1916, equally important as a painter, poet and sculptor. I myself as well as my 12 Children were pressed when Tzara uttered this word which generated justifiable enthusiasm in us. This took place in the café La terrace in Zurich and I had a crumb in my left nostril. I'm convinced that this word has no meaning whatsoever. And that only fools and Spanish professors will take an interest in dates.

5

Speaker 5

9:53

What happens when you cannot explain what has happened, the atrocities that you've witnessed and understand. How would you say something when there's nothing to say anymore? It was to present something that may have seemed absurd and stupid, but then it was an absurd stupid result to an absurd stupid world that they were looking at.

3

Speaker 3

10:18

In order to think about how Dada differs from things like futurism and expressionism, I mean in one way its thinking about the process of fragmentation that occurs in Dada. If you think about the futurist manifesto for instance, he makes his very shocking pronouncements but it's always in a very traditional linear form of language, but with Dada, you have a sense of a very radical fragmentation occurring where meaning is less easy to follow.

7

Speaker 7

10:50

They felt the need to really kind of strike up on their own to take language back to its building blocks. Same thing with Visual Arts, where do you start- you start with the materials. My name is Dawn Addis, I'm professor of history and theory of art at University of Essex. Cabaret Voltaire was founded by Hugo Ball in about 1916 in Zurich.

Speaker 4

11:18

Pacifist co-founder of Zurich dada which he left in 1917 political activity in Switzerland.

7

Speaker 7

11:24

He wanted it to be a kind of literary cabaret, and the audience who went along there expecting poetry were usually quite shocked and startled by what they heard. For example, Ball himself, started experimenting with a form of kind of

4

Speaker 4

11:40

new language. "from Judo balls diaries, 16 June 23 I have invented a new kind of verse -verses without words or sound. The first of these verses I read out tonight"

7

Speaker 7

11:58

It's a nonsense language if you like which sounded vaguely foreign or didn't really mean anything. Though it was still words rather than just pure sounds. He would dress up in the costume and he once got himself encased in a kind of cardboard cylinder with a very tall dunce's hat on his head, and because he couldn't walk in this cylinder he had to be carried on to the platform, where he started reciting his poems.

Speaker 1

12:23

Brian blessed, recorded for the dada festival in London earlier this year

7

Speaker 7

12:51

It wasn't just poems, there was music, there was jazz, songs, and the back cloth was what was described as gigantic cucumbers that were painted by Hans Arp. That was one of the key strands of Dada poetry, the interest in the phonetics and the sounds.

3

Speaker 3

13:40

Ball's involvement with Dada was brief. Insofar as he seems to have reached a kind of spiritual crisis in the context of Dada.

7

Speaker 7

13:53

And it was taken a stage further by Raoul Hausmann

7

Speaker 7

14:02

Who started reciting poems that were simply a letter sound

3

Speaker 3

14:20

the meantime, Tzara, who was a very different personality, effectively took over, I think it's very clear from the start that Tzara was interested in creating sort of new Avantgarde movement

7

Speaker 7

14:37

The other end of the Dada experiments, you have poems that were made up of phrases or words cut out of newspapers or somewhere. Tristan suggested to make a Dadaist you put words in a bag and shake it up and take them out. And then, there you have your new poem. So, there were all kinds of different ways in which language was being disassembled.

1

Speaker 1

15:14

okay to make a Dadaist poem all you have to do is to take a pair of scissors, choose an article as long as you're planning to make your poem. Cut out the article. This is actually an article taken from my own personal copy of auto car from the third of August, 2016. Okay, put out the article, they put out the words that make up this article, cut out the article and cut out the words that make this article and put them in a bag. Shake it, shake it gently like it would say in a recipe! Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag. The poem will be like you. And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming, yet beyond the understanding of the vulgar. That's very nice for us to say so.

1

Speaker 1

16:29

The 24 Vulcans took a short while to do that. Nor do I. So after a brief acquaintance with it. Yep, it's quite fast, sweaty and tired, muscular effort, managing such huge potential. But the dilemma of unwanted botty movement, versus ride quality is not something that you suspect. Big naturally aspirated. It's the agility that's shocking. Although I suppose it shouldn't be attached back to the nose. Settle the nose. Good news if that's what you like to call it automatically.

3

Speaker 3

17:17

I am Arthur da da da da Smith. And i'm a comedian in this parish, and I've always had an interest in Dadaism, and that's why I'm doing this interview with no clothes on, but with a big banana tied to my arm. I'm tempted to introduce now –

3

Speaker 3

17:38

I've got this Dadaist creature with me. You won't be able to see this but I have a small Penguin, and this penguin is a kind of Dadaist figure because it's mindless, because it repeats absolutely everything you say whatever it is.

18:00

Da da da da da da

3

Speaker 3

18:07

Obviously, it was a reaction against the war that was going on, it was an internationalist thing, it was kind of angry pacifists, but actually it was funny too, if you read about some of the things that a cabaret involved there, three people come on stage telling a joke but in a different language, the same joke. In the sense it was the injection of the absurd into our performance. And I think that the absurd is an important element to surprise people, to make them laugh. It blows a fart to the knowledge structures of the world, it says no, don't give me all that rubbish.

3

Speaker 3

18:58

I think you can detect the influence of dada in British comedy really from Spike Milligan. I remember when I was a student, Spike Milligan had a brilliant song out called *I'm walking backwards for Christmas*.

Speaker 3

19:26

I remember once putting that on the jukebox 14 times in a row in a pub.

3

Speaker 3

19:47

You might say it was cabaret for the radio, like the good show. It was cabaret done on the radio, where you never quite knew what to expect, where they'd

be strange punchlines and noises, voices

20:36

The key is it didn't always make sense.



7

Speaker 7

22:27

Dada and surrealism tend to be yoked together in the history of the culture of the 20th century, for good reasons because there are definitely connections.

1

Speaker 1

22:38

Dawn Addis and David Hopkins -art historians and dada experts.

3

Speaker 3

22:44

When Dada began to fizzle out Zurich after about 1918 Tzara moves to Paris. He's been corresponding with André Breton, poet and the leader of a small pro dada function in Paris.

7

Speaker 7

23:02

But at the same time, they're not at all the same thing. Because, I mean Dada was basically saying this is the end, don't sit comfortably at home and make nice pictures for the Bourgeois to hang on their walls, we don't want to do that, you're all idiots.

3

Speaker 3

23:16

Breton felt that it was too negative, between about 1919 and 1922 Breton starts to formulate the idea of a more positive version of Dada, which would eventually become surrealism.

23:34

7

Speaker 7

Beloved imagination. What I most like in you is your unsparing quality. This is the most beautiful night of all. Breton's manifestos in surrealism is a much more kind of personal examination of his and his friends progress through dada out the other end to a point where they felt they had found something- some basis on which to start building again. Surrealism is the invisible ray which will one day enable us to win out over our opponents.

24:14

You are no longer trembling carcass.

7

Speaker 7

24:19

this summer the roses are blue. The wood is of glass. The earth draped in its verdant cloak makes as little impression upon me as a ghost Existence is elsewhere.

5

Speaker 5

24:31

So how did dada really change the world, and which Dadaist was responsible for it.

24:44

BBC art editor Will Gumbert

5

Speaker 5

24:47

You'd have to say that Walberg and Tzara ignited the dada flame. The one who carried the torch was Marcel Duchamp

25:06

Duchamp Marcel French painter, chess player

1

Speaker 1

25:11

and writer, moved to New York in 1915 associated with dada through his use of ready-mades, in particular the fountain.

8

Speaker 8

25:23

We certainly had the same spirit as in Zurich when.. under the name of it, my idea was to find, to choose an object, that will attract me, either by its beauty, or by its ugliness,

3

Speaker 3

25:45

he developed his own form of anti-art in the New York context,

8

Speaker 8

25:50

you find a point of indifference, in my looking at it

3

Speaker 3

25:56

by about 1916 in fact, he produced his first ready-mades. All of this of course was happening quite independently in what's happening in Zurich and it's not until about 1917 or so that Duchamp and Picard, they actually really get to know what happened in Zurich

7

Speaker 7

26:15

Probably Fountain has had a greater impact on art than, let's say, either Picasso or Matisse. He found this word readymade, which applied then to this small series of objects that he produced over time, including Fountain (the urinal)

5

Speaker 5

26:33

There was a little manifesto that said - what was wrong with this, why did it cause such a kerfuffle?

5

Speaker 5

26:47

So he asked some pretty fundamental questions about art so first question was why does art have to be beautiful? Second, he wanted to challenge us: Why does art be an artist at all.

8

Speaker 8

26:56

I don't care about the word art, because it's been so, you know, discredited but you in fact contributed to the discrediting quite deliberately?

Yes. So, I really want to get rid of it. Because the way many people today have done away with religion is sort of unnecessary admiration of art today

5

Speaker 5

27:22

Up until that point. Basically, if you wanted to be considered an artist, you had to use approved art mediums that was panel or canvas for painting, wood or stone for sculpting and Duchamp said That's nonsense. The idea is paramount, that the changes are forever and changes what art can be, conceptual art is born.

1

Speaker 1

28:04

while I was still a student somebody asked me if I wanted to take part in this thing called the Portsmouth sinfonia. And when I learnt about it I thought it was the most amazing thing the Portsmouth Sinfonia was an orchestra. It was also a performance art ensemble. It'd been set up by art students I guess in Portsmouth, including the late composer Gavin Brian. You wore tuxedos and stuff like that, they had the trappings of a proper orchestra, and of course the name you think it's going to be a conventional ensemble, but it was open to anyone, whether or not they had any musical training. If people had musical training what they would do is they would make them play an instrument that they had never played before, so they didn't sound too competent. I think it was positing the notion that craft is not everything

1

Speaker 1

29:11

perhaps the epitome of this is, this performance of Handel's hallelujah chorus at the Albert Hall, you can probably hear me singing in the chorus

1

Speaker 1

29:40

We were trying as hard as we could to do the best performance that we could, but without the ability to do that. And yes, its profoundly contradictory, if we've not tried our best, then it wouldn't have been I think an authentic work of art. Wow, you know, if we were pretending -there's no pretence in it. We just couldn't do any better than we did. I remember the guy that was teaching it. Trying to get us to sing was actually a conventional conductor I guess and so he would often use musical language here to this bit like a dad show. So, it was it was it, it was quite dada though it's been talked about by this bloke trying to get to sing it properly. That was an unsettling experience in itself, but actually performing it. I remember it being tremendously uplifting and being swept up in it yeah, the majesty of the music anyway. Actually, in a sense of vibes, our rendition of it. I'm not a huge fan of classical music and don't know a huge

amount about it but I have bizarrely found a connection with that piece of music.

5

Speaker 5

31:26

John Cage found such affinity with Duchamp and you can see it in his compositions.

31:35

Arts Journalist Jessica Lack..

5

Speaker 5

31:38

He totally embraced the idea of being able to use anything as music. And I think he saw that Dada connection between autonomy, and an archaic sense of what art can be, it can be anything, I can do the same with music

9

Speaker 9

32:00

It's been said that listening to John Cage's music, is like chewing sand. I'll leave that up to your view

7

Speaker 7

32:18

John Cage taught a class in experimental composition at the New School for Social Research in New York in the late 1950s, several of those students went on to found Fluxus

5

Speaker 5

32:44

It wasn't about you know four walls and a piece of work in a gallery, it could be seen anywhere, it could happen anywhere, the embracing of a spontaneity that was very exciting and this comes straight back from Dada

7

Speaker 7

32:56

both Dada and Fluxus were responding to the perception that culture had become completely sort of ossified, that it was owned by the very rich, and the very powerful, especially through the mechanism of museums and galleries.

1

Speaker 1

33:16

Following his lectures in Art History at the University of Illinois, and as the daughter of Fluxus artists De Keens and Knowles

7

Speaker 7

33:23

and instead to have it be really cheap, really free, and something that could be done by almost anyone

Speaker 7

33:38

So that's why we see within Dadaism for example, the deployment of collage right taking symbols from print culture and reassembling them on the page,

4

Speaker 4

33:50

road pulse map from 1919. We call this technique, photo montage, as it demonstrated our aversion to pretending to be artists. We regard ourselves as engineers, we pretended to construct to assemble our work in the style of a mechanic,

7

Speaker 7

34:08

so that your every day is presented to you in terms that are different from the way you normally see them right and we have something similar in Fluxus, although in Fluxus it moves in the direction a little more of everyday activities.

34:26

This is a lecture on how to make a happening.

1

Speaker 1

34:30

Alan Capra co-founder of Fluxus developed the happening.

9

Speaker 9

34:35

Forget all the standard art forms, don't paint pictures don't make poetry don't build architecture don't arrange dances don't write plays, don't compose music

don't make movies. The point is to make something new, something that doesn't even remotely remind you of culture.

7

Speaker 7

34:55

Yoko Ono's grapefruit is a publication of event scores - tuna fish sandwich please imagine 1000 suns in the sky at the same time, let them shine for one hour. Then let them gradually melt into the sky. Make one tuna fish sandwich, and eat. Cloud piece. Imagine the clouds dripping. Dig a hole in your garden, put them in

7

Speaker 7

35:33

Piano piece for David tutor, number one, bring a bale of hay and a bucket of water onto the stage for the piano to eat and drink the performer may then feed the piano, or leave it to eat by itself. If the former, the pieces over after piano has been fed. If the latter it is over after the piano eats or decides not to

9

Speaker 9

36:03

have all your participants start naked, swimming, making love or whatnot. There are times and plenty of places where it wouldn't stir up any dust, just take things as they come and arrange in whatever way is least artificial and easiest

36:17

to do.

5

Speaker 5

36:22

It's a very good way of creating things just with what's around you, that sort of idea that went back to Dada that you can take something from nothing

36:31

and create

5

Speaker 5

36:34

Something beautiful out of it or something absurd or horrendous out of it but the creation is a key aspect to it.

7

Speaker 7

36:42

I essentially grew up alongside Fluxus alongside us every day alongside this blurring of art and life that's so fundamental to the group. I think I was about four years old. I heard this screaming downstairs as loud as I could imagine, going downstairs and I've come around the corner. And it's my father and he's sitting on a stool and his face is red and his eyes are bugged out, and he's screaming and screaming,

37:21

and eventually the scream turns to kind of whispering his voice is completely shot.

7

Speaker 7

37:32

And this was absolutely terrifying. I have since learned that that's his danger music piece, and the score for that reads *Scream, Scream, Scream* with exclamation points. We hesitated to bring our everyday friends from school in to bear witness to it until we got older and then I think almost to a person who thought it was totally cool. That said, I've spent some time on the

38:00

couch.

9

Speaker 9

38:12

If you get stuck for ideas exception to a slice of life idea is the greatest source book of our time. The Yellow Pages of the telephone directory, break open the book at random, put your finger down some point in a page and you'll come up with private detective service, rug cleaning at home, cement blocks, airport limousine transport, Judo lessons. You can get more out of these than out of all of Beethoven, Michelangelo and Racine put together

7

Speaker 7

38:47

One of the really key things about Dada is the way that Dada embraced things like chance, you can surprise yourself, to allow things to influence your creativity, which we're not at all, the normal modes of making art or writing poetry



39:09

The perfect example is John Cage

39:14

“The utility amongst swallows is their music

39:19

They produce it in mid-air.

39:22

To avoid colliding. when he died I received a call from Clee Gray asking me write a text about Duchamp

39:38

And I feared that since

39:41

I loved him so much that

39:42

my remarks would be sentimental

39:46

So I made instead a series of plexigrams and lithographs

39:51

not wanting to say anything about Marcel

39:55

The number of cross sticks is chance determined

40:00

Advanced study

40:02

Home will be Africa,

40:06

Crème fresh followed by three kinds of potato's

40:13

The disease is not under control, taking the doctor's suggestion that I have my hair cut proved useless

40:20

The telegram came, I read it. Death we expect. But all we get

40:29

is life.

4

Speaker 4

40:39

Berlin 1918, collective dada manifesto, the Dadaists are the first to take an aesthetic attitude towards life and this they accomplished by hacking, all the slogans of ethics, culture and in war, which are merely cloaks for weak muscles into their components.

1

Speaker 1

40:57

The idea is that Duchamp and others confronted the world with 100 years ago has reverberated in avantgarde culture ever since. Dada has also reached into more populist circles

2

Speaker 2

41:11

dada and punk were manifesto movements.

4

Speaker 4

41:15

Blast the aesthetical ethical attitudes, blast the bloodless abstraction of expressionism,

2

Speaker 2

41:20

I mean dada had jokingly official manifestos, marking the solemnity of such a thing as a manifesto even as it was generating them

4

Speaker 4

41:34

blast the literary hollow heads, and the theories of improving the world,

2

Speaker 2

41:39

and punk, in a way, had manifestos too although they were sometimes tacit. what was going on in England was economic disaster, among other things, the feeling that the greatness of a country was going away, and a feeling of hopelessness, you know, which resulted in the sex pistols song God Save the Queen

2

Speaker 2

42:09

can be understood as some kind of continuation of dada, partly because it is so amazingly thrillingly negative

42:23

energy with which

2

Speaker 2

42:24

John sings, there's no future for you and the glee

42:29

that feels Dada

2

Speaker 2

42:31

It's not brooding, it's looking for meaning, it's full of intention, but it's all about meaninglessness.

5

Speaker 5

42:57

Ultimately it was very manipulative and designed to sell records, clothes, and an idea

5

Speaker 5

43:06

And I don't think the initial Dadaists were that at all, I think they had genuine anger. Whereas I think the Pistols were showbiz.

1

Speaker 1

43:38

In both pop and avantgarde culture, performance artists have sought to challenge the system. Dada's shock and awe method has been a useful tactic, for better or for worse.

10

Speaker 10

43:49

The reason why you did this because you've got egos that could no longer be satisfied in the music industry,

1

Speaker 1

43:53

the Kay Foundation, Bill Drummond and Jimmy Corty, were known as the band KLF. Until they suddenly retired from music in 1993 now calling themselves artists, they went to a disused boathouse in Scotland, and film themselves burning a million pounds

10

Speaker 10

44:11

and he wanted a way to become something big and to be the first people to burn a million quid, we're getting into history, and it's just satisfying your ego, I'll admit that. It's a publicity stunt that gets you in the newspapers.

44:30

of course, we have egos, haven't you got an ego?

44:32

Yeah, but not as big as yours

5

Speaker 5

44:35

The Kay foundation with burning the million pounds, was of course rooted in dada and questioning some real fundamentals, you know the value of art, what is the value of money what is money, what is the purpose of money, is it to buy entertainment or how's this for entertainment, is about spectacle

houses, spectacle is about creating history, creating history is about having so-called original ideas, or who else has done this before, nobody.

“I think of all the people who need help in this country, in your own country. And so badly, we're blasting through the Christmas period in the in the centre of the city, in order to raise money for the homeless, and a great number of people including myself must be looking at you both and saying what kind of weird people are we hearing”

3

Speaker 3

45:20

Hang on- if we go and spend the money on swimming pools, and Rolls Royce's, I don't think people would be upset. No, it's because we've burnt it

5

Speaker 5

45:28

so it was conceptually, incredibly strong. And then there was a beauty in the fact that nothing remained its entirely ephemeral, which I suppose you could say is the epitome of Duchampism, which is the idea is paramount, and the execution doesn't really matter. But here we have it is all idea, and as far as execution has nothing to see guys.

3

Speaker 3

45:55

I hope you can you make an artistic statement, without like you know, that you can help people rather than just waste it.

46:03

We have helped people by burning that money, How?

46:06

It helped bring something into people's heads, and it helps them.

4

Speaker 4

46:09

I think it's disgusting that two people should be allowed to such a thing with so much poor in this country and foreign countries

Their argument is that it's their money, they can do what they like with it

Yes I can see that but I don't think they have a conscience

5

Speaker 5

46:27

Marcel Duchamp when you set out to challenge all the established values, your, your means were shock. You shocked the cubists, you shocked the public you shocked the buying public, do you think the public can be shocked anymore by anything?

That's over, you can attract,

46:46

at least with the same means

1

Speaker 1

46:50

Marcel Duchamp talking almost 50 years ago, being interviewed by the Queen and the many paradoxes of Dada's legacy, have been challenging us for decades since

47:13

Since the 60's really truly anything has gone, please welcome BBC this year's brief lecturer Grayson Perry..

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Speaker 6

47:19

artists have used their bodies, other people's bodies, they've walked. They've got shot, they've got sunburned, doing nothing. So, art has become this incredibly baggy idea.

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Speaker 3

47:32

If one of the purposes of putting on a dada event is to shake people out of this rut, how do you shock a contemporary audience

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Speaker 1

47:39

dada festival organizer Mike Freeman.

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Speaker 3

47:44

When I really thought about it, there were very few things that would be shocking in a way that was useful

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Speaker 5

47:50

loyalist terrorist Michael Stone in 2006 charged into the Northern Ireland parliament, carrying a viable explosive device -he was luckily arrested, but in his trial, the excuse he gave was, it was a piece

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Speaker 6

48:06

of performance art. that's a shocking thing that art -the shock value of it has become so commonplace that shocking things oh that must be an artwork, you can

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Speaker 3

48:19

show them something really far out, something that really goes beyond comfort for the person putting on the act

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Speaker 5

48:26

There's a Chinese artist called Zu Yu, who I think didn't quite get it but he thought shock was the real point of art. And so, he had himself photographed eating a stillborn baby.

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I think people look at it and think he's gone a bit far

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Speaker 6

48:45

But maybe you just kind of call it the avantgarde's bluff and saying, I'll show you what shocking is

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Speaker 4

48:52

The photograph he took weren't very good.

The bourgeois was one of our main target. Richard came in 1916 from Berlin to Zurich, where he became a co-founder of dada, studied medicine there and returned to Berlin in January 1917, where he and Hausmann founded the Berlin dada. But the Bourgeois has been attacked so often that this couldn't satisfy me either. So, I found out what is the Bourgeois and I made the sad discovery that we were all Bourgeois.

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Speaker 10

49:31

Speaking of the public opinion. I've had enough of that permissive society

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Speaker 5

49:38

This absurdist idea of an art form, which is just there to wind up an establishment and to aggressively not engage with the establishment on its own terms.

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Speaker 5

50:07

With the Goons and the Pythons who were these anti-establishment figures but actually had gone to pretty good universities, and they were working with a BBC – a big establishment. So, there's always this paradox, I think with dada for it to have a voice, for it to have the impact it needs, it actually requires the establishment to embrace it,

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Speaker 1

50:54

I never had any idea that I wanted to be part of the avant-garde, having an experience of that as a student I saw no particular value in that. What I wanted to do is take those ideas of disruption of performance arts, of nonsense, and bring them into the

51:16

mainstream.

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Speaker 1



51:20

Once you become successful, then the establishment tempts you into its buzz. Within a year or two of finding an alternative community you got people who took the performance trope, shout political references, but robbed it of its disturbing elements of the Dadaist elements, and you know broke into the mainstream.

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Speaker 3

51:57

Dada exists to stick two fingers up at the establishment in a way. As soon as Dada is marshalled into in paradigm of acceptable then it's dead. It's always going to be outside, out with the normal procedure, a lot of modern art now is trying to be a bit funny and a bit off the scale, but in the end, someone pays you know, 12 million pounds for it and then it's become part of the establishment at which point it is that

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Speaker 5

52:33

we kind of say, you know, along comes a young artist, talented, little bit angry and shakes fist at the establishment and says I am going to show you what fantastic innovation I have here

52:51

The art world looks down and sort of goes,

52:53

yeah. Nice rebellion, welcome in. Because what they don't realize, by being all inventive and creative is the lifeblood of capitalism is new ideas, they need new stuff to sell.

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Speaker 5

53:16

It's so much part of our everyday culture that we hardly see it anymore. particularly think about sampling, think about collage, thinking about cutting up anything, think about the way that we question the way that we look at everything around us, it's very dada. You know we don't take things for granted the way we once did, you know, if there's a tradition or something, there will always be somebody there to try and break it and start again,

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Speaker 5

53:50

major mainstream pop stars like Lady Gaga is attracted to the Dadaists aesthetic.

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Speaker 5

54:06

Her name Gaga is not a mistake. It's not just about queen and radio of gaga. It is a riff on the word dada as well and she is a performance artist, being a pop star so she completely aware of what she's doing, spending a lot of time with people like Marina, Abramović for example, learning the history of performance art, and its roots which of course, sit in Cabaret Voltaire in 1960 and so it continues to live both on the fringes and within the avantgarde. And actually, the main street of comedy today, pop music today. And art today.

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Speaker 1

54:54

100 years ago, the activities of Hugo Ball, Tzara, Cabaret Voltaire and in the Dada magazine, signified a wholesale rebellion against the predominant culture, but their tactics then have now become a means to get in the establishment, rubber stamp of approval, what would the Dadaists make of it all?

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Speaker 5

55:19

the original Dadaists, categorically I think I can say that you have not approved any contemporary iterations of dada, for the plain and simple reason -at its core, Dadaism didn't approve of anything.

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Speaker 1

55:34

least of all this BBC program, about them. Years ago, I went into Chelsea. On a Saturday and there was a bloke from the sculpture department dragging a bit of a tree round and I said to him, what are you doing and he said, I'm doing performance art. I said but there's nobody here. He said, exactly. I mean whatever you think about Dada's relationship with contemporary culture, you know, it's been distorted or appropriated or it's still gloriously relevant. At least you get this feeling of the power of the original stuff, of this extraordinary creativity that was happening first in Zurich and then later on in Paris, it's still, powerful, it still feels like strange disturbing nonsense.