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Dada Art Analysis

Can all art be judged, and should all art have meaning? These are difficult questions to answer, especially since art is ever growing with more kinds of art and even more ways of interpreting them. Analyzing art has become increasingly difficult because of the different ways people express themselves and what they feel when they make art. The question then becomes, with all these unconventional forms of art, can we judge and critique them in a conventional way? Jampa's art consists of pieces and ornaments found around the city of Ellensburg and is put together in a somewhat systematic way, which can definitely be called unconventional and different. This organized chaos of art, as Jampa put it, does not have a deeper meaning or reflection of reality. It is merely art; an accumulation of materials found around a city that was assembled to his liking. This seemingly random assemblage is only meant to be observed and enjoyed in a subjective way. The meaningful yet meaningless is why I am going to evaluate this art using the Dada manifesto written by Tzara.

What is Dada and what does it mean? Nothing. Dada means nothing yet means multiple things at the same time. In the manifesto itself, the author writes, "don't waste our time over a word that doesn't mean anything." (Tzara Pg.2) The fact that this entire art movement has a name that does mean anything gives us the slight idea that this movement is an all-encompassing, non-conventional movement that is comprised of different forms of art. Whether it be poetry or finding random things from the street and assembling them together. Going back to the first question posed, should art be judged? Well according to this manifesto, not necessarily. Tristan Tzara writes, "A work of art shouldn't be beauty per se, because it is dead; neither gay nor sad, neither light nor dark; A work of art is never beautiful, by decree, objectively, for everyone. Criticism is, therefore, useless; it only exists subjectively, for every individual, and without the slightest general characteristic." (Tzara Pg.2) With this quote, Tzara is trying to say that art is interpreted subjectively by the viewer. Where one person might view a piece in one way, another might see it completely differently. Above all else, he says that art is not meant to be critiqued because of this. Similar to how one might see a dog in a cloud, and another sees an elephant in the same cloud, it becomes useless to judge these two viewpoints by the same parameters. Coming back to Jampa's art, he turns random objects he finds into pieces of art and sometimes even lets his observers add something to the piece. One person might add a piece much more differently than the next person which symbolizes the subjectivity to all this. At no point did

Jampa call his art Dada but the more I analyze it the more it seems to fit in perfectly with this movement, but that is part of the point. One does not need to explicitly identify their art as Dada because that would in a way institutionalize it, which is against the entire idea of Dada. By saying this is Dada and this is not Dada, we would be making formal rules and guidelines for Dada and that is what Dada as a whole is against, the conventions of art and the meaning people try to attach to the art of others because of the subjectivity of art as a whole.

Tzara further explains Dada saying, “thus DADA was born, out of a need for independence, out of mistrust for the community. People who join us keep their freedom.” (Tzara Pg3.) Tzara is explaining here how Dada was initially meant as a way to reject the communities and break away from the norm. By not following any of the rules set by art theories, Dada is giving the artist full freedom to express their art how they see fit, unlike most art communities and theories. There are certain parameters that you need to fall within to create “good art” but by ignoring those parameters altogether, Dada is destroying the reason behind art and creating a movement that is all encompassing and welcoming of all thoughts and expressions. “We’ve had enough of the laboratories of formal ideas” Tzara says. Everything non-formal and non-conventional is all welcome into Dada. This is movement that is meant to encompass all is not only limited to one form of art, but Dada also welcomes everything including poetry and performance art, as long as it is done freely. This idea of freedom is why I think this analysis fits so perfectly in with Jampa’s art. His idea is to find different things and assemble them in the way he sees fit, separate from the conventional ways. Even the idea that he finds pieces of art lying around and fits them together is extremely different. Aside from the creation of the art he does not simply find a gallery or a conventional and reasonable place to display his art. He scatters his art around Ellensburg and lets anyone who might come across it enjoy it how they see fit.

Dada is more about the perception of art and the way the art makes the artist and the observer feel. That is what matters most in Dada. Jampa shows this by directing and simply presents it as art and cutting out the other conventional parts of it such as having a deep meaning behind his piece. Jampa is making his own rules and makes art in his own way, the Dada way.

Lucas Carneiro Maia

Analysis of Jampa Dorje's Art

In this analysis of Jampa Dorje's art, I will make use of institutional art theories from Tzara's Dada Manifesto and Arthur Danto along with Dickie's take on the artworld. I will use Tzara's perspective to get at the meaning of Dada's criticism of art and its institution and how this applies to Jampa's pieces as an outside artist and divergent thinker. Tzara was a poet and one of the central figures of the Dada movement and its response to World War 1. Dadaism is a movement with a goal to deconstruct the status quo by means of avant-garde expression of feeling art. The word itself "Dada" is meaningless and can be a placeholder for whatever one wants as shown in the following passage, "Dada does not mean anything" (Dada Manifesto, Pg 1). This line of reasoning gives the artist the ability to simply make art out of anything including cutouts of journals, pig heads atop military memorabilia or even a urinal. Essentially, Dada is a form of revolution against the art establishment, it seeks to take away the common sense and formality the bourgeois and the academics have put in it. Dada as an institutional art theory is anti-institutions, anti-art, and anti-theories. The other institutional art theory I will use comes from Arthur Danto and George Dickie. Due to their similarities, I will refer to them as D&D since Dickie essentially built upon Danto's ideas of the art world. In their perspectives, art theories build atop one another, which makes the framework for a metatheory. In this perspective what may appear as a lousy representation may be a beautifully crafted formalist or expressionist pieces. This does not mean we should simply create a new perspective for every single art piece. In their perspective, recognition is essential in the differentiation of what is or is not art. The one major difference between Danto and Dickie is the latter's artifactuality, where there must have been something to be experienced such as a dance performance or poem (Dickie, *The New Institutional Theory of Art*, Pg 1). Since the pieces I will analyze have an artifactual nature to them, this point will not generate between him and Danto's perspective.

The first piece I will analyze will be one of his 1972 etchings from his time in Fairbanks, Alaska. This is the second etching in the etchings 1972 files from Jampa's website. This composition contains both written and visual elements. It refers to the story of a river who fell in love with a woman. While the poem is in the center of the piece, the whole composition has images etched around it and paint behind the poem itself. In comparison to other art pieces by this artist, this is one of their more standard following art pieces. It does not contain the Dada quality of subversion of expectations or commentary on what art itself is. It continues to challenge Dada philosophy due to its coherence and clear representation of the story it is referencing. Even the etchings on the side and surrounding the poem contain references to the river story. A dada art piece would more likely be a collage with words and disorderly images bunched together instead of a well-organized poem. While this is not a revolutionary piece, it

does have the feeling of art made for the enjoyment of the artist themselves. It does not contain the flashing or ambition of a Picasso or Monet while maintaining a subtle individual beauty which is a Dada quality as shown in the following passage “Dada was born, out of a need for independence” (Tzara, Dada Manifesto, Pg 3). Due to its conventional appearance and physicality, the river’s etching resonates with D&D’s philosophy of art. This being the metatheory of an art world where art pieces are judged by the theories which would best identify their qualities within the context, they are in. As said in Dickie’s new institutional art theory, “A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public” (Pg 7). This piece is clearly a physical artifact which contains properties such as its poetry and etched drawings, it can also most importantly be experienced. Moreover, the piece can be categorized due to these attributes and be seen within the most appropriate context within the artworld. Even if the etching was not made with the distinct purpose of being presented, it contains aesthetic qualities which follow common norms and can be judged by expressivist or representational theories.

Jampa’s other piece I will analyze is his tack shack. This is the building where for many years, Jampa would tack objects he found in his walks around the Kittitas valley. Due to the piece being made of many different types of objects such as bones or rusted metal piece it is called an assemblage. The piece is not conventional by any means, as Jampa himself said, “Look for nothing behind the junk”. This is a prime example of Jampa’s connection to dadaism. There is no larger commentary on society, no goal to represent, no rhyme or reason to it. The tack shack is art made for the artist’s own enjoyment and interest. It challenges our understanding of what is or isn’t art by simply having been made. For anyone looking at it, it may simply look like a pile of junk put together, but as we get to know the one who made it, it is hard to look at it and not think about what he was trying to get at. Where Dada in the late 1910’s was a response to the horrors of war and western imperialism, this is a response to the art establishment’s focus on fine museum-grade cookie cutter art. Even though Jamap Dorje perhaps never thought of it as anything besides a place to tack all the strange things he found, Tack shack was and still is a monument to a outside artist expressing his own independent perspective for no particular reason and that is Dada.

Preston McNeil

Art Analysis: Dickie, Dada, and Moon Landing

In *The New Institutional Theory of Art*, George Dickie crafts his working theory of art. Dickie provides what he considers to be necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be art. These conditions are meant to be widely applicable. Dickie thinks that for a thing to be considered art, it needs to be an artifact, “an object made by [humans]”, and it needs to be placed within an artistic framework or context (69). Dickie’s new institutional theory affirms that “works of art are art as a result of the position they occupy within an institutional framework or context” (69). In this way, art is relative to and contingent on an artworld. Dickie’s new institutional theory can be accurately regarded as a meta-theory because it is intended to encompass and include all philosophical frameworks that attempt to define art.

Tristan Tzara’s, *Dada Manifesto*, seeks to deconstruct and reject the idea that art requires a given definition, intent, logic, theory, or set of parameters. *Dada Manifesto* strips the limiting aspects of theory away from art. Tzara suggests the possibility that art does not need to be understood to be art. Dada is even sometimes deemed ‘anti-art’. Tzara states that the word “Dada does not mean anything”, and this view of Dada is reflective of the nonsensical views that Tzara holds about art (2). To Tzara, art has no objective logic or meaning that can be understood by all, and he emphasizes the presence of subjectivity in art. Tzara’s, *Dada Manifesto*, opens art up to artistic play by loosening the constraints on conceptions of art.

Jampa Dorje, also known as Richard Denner, is an Ellensburg artist that crafted the unique combine-style art piece titled, *Moon Landing*. *Moon Landing* joins together a multitude of diverse objects in a visually and conceptually explosive way. Jampa calls this form of art ‘junk assemblage’. The found objects that culminate to create Jampa’s artwork would be considered ‘junk’ by many people, but Jampa brings this ‘junk’ into his artistic world. Jampa notes how he frames these found objects and finds a home for the art.

Jampa’s process of bringing found objects into the artworld can be correlated directly to how Dickie’s, *The New Institutional Theory of Art*, talks about how driftwood and urinals can achieve the status of art. Dickie explains that “the urinal (the simple object) is being used as an artistic medium to make *Fountain* (the complex object) which is an artifact within the artworld – Duchamp’s artifact” (71). With *Moon Landing*, Jampa makes use of materials like firewood, a paintbrush, and a broken brake light. These found object materials become more than artifacts simply because of the context in which Jampa frames them. Applying Dickie’s framework, the firewood, paintbrush, and broken brake light (the simple objects) are used as an artistic medium to make *Moon Landing* (the complex object) which is an artifact in the art world – Jampa’s Artifact. The freedom provided by Dickie’s necessary and sufficient conditions for art allow for *Moon Landing* to be aptly characterized and understood as art.

Much like Jampa himself, Jampa's artistic process is eclectic. Jampa identifies as being many things including: a Buddhist, a writer, and a painter. His art draws influences from every aspect of his varied life. Jampa also concedes a Dadaist influence inherent in his work, and this influence is clear to see in *Moon Landing*. It would be inaccurate to say that Jampa breaks artistic rules because Jampa imposes no rules on his art. *Moon Landing* butts up against artistic expectations by including objects and materials that are atypical of the artworld in an abstract fashion. In *Moon Landing*, brightly painted blocks of wood unusually surround a blackened, more naturally colored, piece of wood that lies at the relative center of the piece. Most viewers are not accustomed to the peculiar juxtaposition of colors, shapes, textures, and objects Jampa employs in *Moon Landing*. *Moon Landing* is also not a depiction or representation. Jampa even warns people to look for nothing beyond the 'junk'. Jampa does not want people to try to find some hidden meaning in *Moon Landing*.

Jampa does not think that *Moon Landing* is due for an explanation, and Tzara does not think that any art is owed an explanation. Tzara's notion of Dadaism stresses that meaning and the application of logic is a non-necessity for art (Dada Manifesto, 6). Jampa's, *Moon Landing*, takes part in freedom, nonsense, and play. These are all traits that Tzara works to safeguard and encourage in *Dada Manifesto*. Similar to freedom, nonsense, and play, Tzara values things like "suppleness, enthusiasm, and even the joy of injustice" (Dada Manifesto, 8). Both Tzara and Jampa seem to want to decentralize the way in which art is conceptualized. Jampa notes the improvised, spontaneous, manner in which he creates art. Jampa claims to make artistic decisions based primarily on a feeling he has instead of a narrative he wants to show. The firewood, paintbrush, and broken brake light in *Moon Landing* are not meant to convey any clear, logical, story. Jampa's artistic attitude is indicative of what Tzara calls 'Dadaist Spontaneity'. Tzara roughly characterizes this 'Dadaist Spontaneity' as happening "with neither aim nor plan, without organization: uncontrollable folly, decomposition" (Dada Manifesto, 9). Forgoing a given aim, plan, and organization in *Moon Landing* instills a sense of provocation in Jampa's work. *Moon Landing* proficiently challenges artistic norms that would say things like a broken brake light cannot be art, art must have a sense of completeness, or art must represent something. Jampa's, *Moon Landing*, can be seen to exemplify properties and attitudes identified as Dadaist by Tzara in *Dada Manifesto*.

Works Cited

George Dickie, *The New Institutional Theory of Art*. 1974

Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*. March 23, 1918

Jampa Dorje, *Moon Landing*. dpress.net, Gallery of Combines



Moon Landing

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