



ISRAELA HARGIL

RENDEZVOUS WITH DUCHAMP

The encounter with Marcel Duchamp's work, years ago, at the Israel Museum, made me conscious of the readymade concept and keenly interested in it. His works in New York excited my intellectual curiosity and urged me to learn more about his thought from his writings. Much later, when I went to Philadelphia where most of his work is kept, I had already produced some readymade sculptures myself. There confronted by his work, I felt a strong urge to respond, and for me response means artistic creation. But how would I converse with Duchamp? How should I go about having a "rendezvous" with him? Where am I to find the courage to interpret him and add statements of my own to all that output which followed in his wake? And, to make things worse, I - who in all my artistic activity have been careful to keep clear of any imitation and even avoided borrowing - how shall I now walk the thin rope of quotation?

At that time I was creating constructions made up of objects picked up in the countryside around my studio. I collected implements and simple machines made from sheet and solid iron which had served in their time in land cultivation and farming, now left to rust and decay, as people left the village, headed for the city. I felt that their shapes, colours and previous function had something in common with Duchamp's regard for the machine, or rather with the dual concept "man/machine" (1).

The new works I made afterwards borrowed some names and schemes from Duchamp in order to sound his ideas by using other materials, on another scale, in three dimensions (2) but still made up of stuff I found nearby, vibrant with local connotations (3).

An undercurrent of sensitivity for the rough, scratched iron is involved here, as a distant but deep echo, bound up with my remembered sensation of touching the dry earth, which gets under your fingernails.

In some sculptures I combined metal with polyester: this translucent material, of a liquidity petrified when cast, is a very good medium for expressing the erotic and in its murky depths it seems to pick up and harbour all the surrounding humdrum activity. We and the things around us penetrate also into some hollow structures - the ones on the podium as well as into those suspended from the ceiling (4).

I hope that the humour and various references woven into these works strike home and stir up in the viewer a desire to embrace the entire ensemble. I accordingly provide the person "given" to it (5) a guide-line in the form of my "Notes-in-a-Valise" (6) which the viewer may follow to share with me the exciting process in which intellect joins artistic creation or, if I may put it that way, "grey-matter" is united with rusty matter.

ISRAELA HARGIL

TO BE LOOKED AT WITH BOTH EYES - 1992

שתי דקות התבוננות בשתי עיניים - 1992

ברזל, כיתוב IRON, WRITING

מ"ד 40x100x100 CM



1. This is well expressed by Duchamp's drawing "Apprentice in the Sun" and by elements of machine parts in his works.
2. Duchamp's works are mostly two-dimensional, such as "The Large Glass" to which several of my works refer.
3. Two of the works are related to Arie Aroch who made use of readymades in his works.
4. "Set-up Frames" were made after a work by Hans Haacke following Duchamp.
5. Given - "Etant Donn e" - Duchamp's last work unveiled after his death.
6. Duchamp knew, already in the thirties, to market copies of his paintings and notes in the "Green Box" and in "Box-in-a-Valise".



מסגרות סדר SET-UP FRAMES

ברזל, פותחן, צל IRON, OPENER, SHADOW

30x50x50 CM ס"מ

POETIC STATEMENT IN RUSTY IRON

The spirit of the smasher of idols, the iconoclast and professed heretic Marcel Duchamp hovers over the 20th century art world. In his "readymades" he undermines the foundations of traditional aesthetics once and for all and challenges the conception of the work of art as something unique and original. He substitutes instead common articles, including commercial products, thus raising several questions: What is a work of art? What is it that makes something into a work of art? Can non-artistic materials become art, and under what circumstances? Paradoxically, over the years these blatant presentations have turned into secular icons and objects of veneration.

Some artists have followed Duchamp in using the ready-made object as a meaningful work of art. Others were influenced by the ideology behind the use of readymades, which lets the artist decide as a matter of principle that "this is art because I decide so" - and presented art as an object-less idea. Still others, mostly contemporary artists, have copied and quoted from his work, in keeping with his dictum that originality and authoritative uniqueness do not matter and the copy has the same value as the original. These artists, who are engaged in appropriating the works of the past, raise in their work, questions other than those Duchamp did. They raise issues of social, economic and aesthetic value pertinent to their time.

Israela Hargil is also a Duchamp follower. She uses readymades and quotes from his works. Her sculptures, such as the "Nine Bachelors", "Sieves of Light", and "Chocolate Grinder" are taken directly from the Duchamp forms and works vocabulary. However, unlike the appropriating artists, her quotations are accompanied by a very personal and unique interpretation. This is no imitation, no appropriation, but a gesture, a statement of relevance, even a dialogue. Her Bachelors do bear the same name coined by Duchamp, but even the material they are made of is entirely different. Here they are made of rusty motorcar exhausts and heavy cast-iron sewage pipes, solid, machoistic looking, and of a very impressive presence. These are not Duchamp's Bachelors, made of split lead moulds, who suffer from fears of castration, nor are they delicate and fragile like Sherry Levin's glass castings.

Hargil's Bachelors proudly own their Duchamp origins, but also proclaim their presence as a personal unique work. Duchamp's ironic humour, which is inseparable from his work, is also apparent in Hargil's work, whether in the positioning or in the verbal choice made. When she modifies the titles as in "Why don't you Sneeze Rrose Selavy" she enters into a dialogue, and answers the question through the title: "Why did Rrose sneeze? Because!" Duchamp's absurd question, to which there can be no answer, receives here a rejoinder no less absurd, creating an interaction and a humorous dialogue between Hargil and Duchamp.

A similar but more serious and profound dialogue exists in the work "Notes-in-a-Valise." Duchamp's valise contains miniature relics of some of his works and notes, whereas in her valise Hargil displays her creative laboratory while pointing out the Duchamp connection, so that, while confirming her affinity with him she also puts forward a clear personal expression. The work "Illuminating Gas" reveals yet another vein, as Hargil labels it "Light for the Gentiles." In our culture this expression is loaded with meaning, here perhaps ironically, which takes it beyond strictly artistic aesthetics. The scrap iron bits and pieces also carry a significant emotional load - the rust reminding us of military equipment stranded on the battlefield and the burnt armoured cars at Shaar Hagai, and we are thus led in directions other than those laid out by the "aesthetic indifference" which dictated to Duchamp his artistic conception.

"Gas-Gas-Gas", which for Duchamp, only stands for illuminating gas, here triggers an entirely different train of very loaded associations.

"Double Sign" pays homage to Duchamp and to artists he has influenced, in that it bears on one side the words "Water & Gas", but on the other side "Agrippas Street", after Aroch who was deeply influenced by the originator of readymades.

Israela Hargil thus follows in Duchamp's footsteps, but branches out on a new course, all her own. Despite the fact that her sculptures are constructed of old and battered junk, "not pretty" objects, she succeeds in making a poetic statement of distinctive beauty, while maintaining a dialogue with the spiritual father - Marcel Duchamp.

NITSA REICH



מרסל דושאן: " ... לא להאזין - זו הדרך להבין מוסיקה...
בחדר אמבטיה אידאלי ימצא ברז שמפסיק לטפטף כשלא מקשיבים לו"

הברז פתוח KEEP LISTENING
ברזל, פוליסטר, כיתוב IRON, POLYESTER, WRITING
17x28x20 ס"מ

SCULPTURE EXHIBITION IN THE ARTISTS HOUSE-JERUSALEM - JULY 94

"Rendezvous with Duchamp" is the title of this exhibition, a third in a series. The works on show are a combination of rusted iron readymade objects and polyester which "adopts willingly any shape, flows like water from a tap, sifts light and is a very good medium for expressing the erotic".

Eighteen, three dimensional, works are presented here with names such as: "Aroch's Tap", "Illuminating Gas" and "Notes in a valise". The notes are 30 collage boards in which Israella Hargil reveals not only the origins of her inspiration but also the process of creation.

The quotations are from a catalog of the exhibition.

Opening: Saturday 2.7.94 at 11:00 AM.



SET-UP FRAMES

In a third exhibition in this series Israella Hargil shows eighteen works out of twenty five.

The artist, who for years sculpted in stone, returns now to iron, old rusty metal stamped with traces of previous use and with polyester.

Until now polyester has been foreign to Israella's artistic idiom "Synthetic material", she says, but here, it adopts willingly any shape and quality she requires: rigid or pliable transparent or opaque. The polyester "flows" like water from a tap, sifts form and light, moulds organs imprinted in a chair intended for "Ladies Only".

However, the exhibition is essentially composed of iron objects, a combination of readymades, metal scrap and home utensils which have served in a previous life, and here receive artistic meaning.

The exhibition holds quotations of art history, Israeli art history and even current events. The artist has created "Notes-in-a-valise", collage boards exhibited as a work in its own right. Through these she reveals, without inhibition, not only the origins of her inspiration, but also the process of creation allowing us to discover a world ordinarily hidden from us.

Marcel Duchamp, the French American artist and thinker, has been boundless source of inspiration for Israella Hargil. She has incorporated a short biography of his life and works in her "notes".

Ideas and forms, like thoughts do not evolve in straight lines, they follow their own paths. Although inspired by Duchamp, the works contemplated show considerable difference from the source.

Nine Bachelors - hollow sewage and exhaust pipes are placed upright on a podium in colloquy. This single work is the keystone of the entire exhibition. For here, are rusty scraps of iron, which, by virtue of the absurd become human undoubtly a work dominated by humor.

"My Tool Box" contains connotations to other works shown in the exhibition.

The title "Chastity Belt" stands for sexuality, present in several works here.

Underlined with humour these daily objects stand out somewhat rusty and worn but all so very human.

LADIES ONLY תושבת

מ"ד 57x57x84 CM IRON, POLYESTER, WRITING ברזל, פוליסטר, כיתוב

NURITH LEVI