

THE ENDURING IMPACT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A collection of perspectives

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The Alterity of the Readymade: *Fountain* and Displaced Artists in Wartime

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Abstract

In April 1917, a porcelain urinal titled *Fountain* was submitted by Marcel Duchamp (or by his female friend, Louise Norton) under the pseudonym 'R. MUTT', to the Society of Independent Artists in New York. The Society's committee refused to show it in their annual exhibition of some 2,125 works held at the Grand Central Palace. Eighty-seven years later, in 2004, *Fountain* was voted the most influential work of art in the 20th century by a panel of world experts. We inherit the 1917 work not because the original object survived—it was thrown out into the rubbish—but through a photographic image that Alfred Stieglitz was commissioned to take. In this photo, Marsden Hartley's *The Warriors*, painted in 1913 in Berlin, also appears, enlisted as the backdrop for the piece of American hardware Duchamp selected from a plumbing showroom. To highlight the era of the Great War and its effects of displacement on individuals, this article considers each subject in turn: Marcel Duchamp's departure from Paris and arrival in New York in 1915, and Marsden Hartley's return to New York in 1915 after two years immersing himself in the gay subculture in pre-war Berlin. As much as describe the artists' experiences of wartime, explain the origin of the readymade and reconstruct the events of the notorious example, *Fountain*, the aim of this article is to additionally bring to the fore the alterity of the *other* item imported ready-made in the photographic construction—the painting *The Warriors*. In the context of early 20th century modernity, I seek to demonstrate how Duchamp and Hartley became, in different ways, displaced subjects during the Great War and how Stieglitz's photograph ends up being one record of this fate.

Keywords

Alfred Stieglitz; exiles; *Fountain*; Marcel Duchamp; Marsden Hartley; readymade

I wonder whether you could manage to drop in at 291 Friday sometime. I have, at the request of Roché, Covet, Miss Wood, Duchamp & Co., photographed the rejected "Fountain". You may find the photograph of some use – It will amuse you to see it. – The "Fountain" is here too.¹

Alfred Stieglitz to the art critic Henry McBride,
19 April, 1917

No, not rejected. A work can't be rejected by the Independents. It was simply suppressed.²

Marcel Duchamp in interview with Pierre Cabanne,
1967

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- 1 Alfred Stieglitz to the art critic Henry McBride, 19 April, 1917. In William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp / Fountain* (Texas: Menil Foundation, 1989), 34.
 - 2 Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padget (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 54–55. These interviews were conducted in 1967 when Duchamp was aged 80. A letter written on 11 April 1917 to his sister Suzanne Duchamp, in Paris, enlists the word 'refuse'. He writes, 'Tell the family this snippet: the Independents opened here with enormous success. A female friend of mine, using a male pseudonym, Richard Mutt, submitted a porcelain urinal as a sculpture. It wasn't at all indecent. No reason to refuse it. The committee decided to refuse to exhibit this thing. I handed in my resignation and it'll be a juicy piece of gossip in New York'. Francis Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds. *Affect Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 47. For some interpreters the reference made to a female friend is an early reference to Duchamp's alter ego Rose Sélavy, for others a reference to one of three possible subjects: Sélavy, or Louise Norton, or Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. It is most likely Louise Norton who physically delivered *Fountain* to the Independents.
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Many accounts of the history of *Fountain* go by this general version: a porcelain urinal selected by Marcel Duchamp, signed 'R. Mutt' with the date '1917', was presented for exhibition at the Society of Independent Artists in New York in April 1917, for which it was rejected. There was no jury. All works submitted with the correct entrance fees paid, would be shown. But *Fountain* was not, voted down by a small majority when ten members of the Society's committee decided its fate two days before the opening night. Eighty-seven years later, in 2004, *Fountain* was voted the most influential work of art in the 20th century by a panel of world experts (Fig. 1).³



Figure 1. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, photograph by Alfred Stieglitz. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP. Copyright Agency, 2019.

Marcel Duchamp did not act alone. R. Mutt, the anonymous artist, stands in, arguably, for as many as six individuals significant to the events.⁴ Like the form of the thing itself, the author of it was made deliberately ambiguous. The urinal was found behind a partition after the exhibition and taken to Alfred Stieglitz's gallery 291. There Stieglitz took a commissioned photograph of it with the canvas *The Warriors*, painted by the American Modernist Marsden Hartley in 1913 in Berlin, as the backdrop. In remarks quoted at the outset to this essay, Stieglitz makes reference to the object itself almost as afterthought: 'The "Fountain" is here too'. And perhaps Duchamp was also less interested in the fate of a material object, in fact, the urinal itself would be thrown out into the rubbish soon after Stieglitz had photographed it—but Duchamp was absolutely committed to ensure its ideas and very concept entered the public domain. To do this the Stieglitz photograph was published in the second issue of the Society's occasional magazine, *The Blind Man*, with a defence of *Fountain*, explaining why it should not have been 'suppressed' as a work of art, to use Duchamp's term, and giving credence to its merit and value.⁵

Duchamp had left Europe in 1915 because of his changing attitudes toward the artistic milieu in Paris, and because he could no longer abide the patriotic fervour associated with the Great War, and, yet, within two years of arriving in New York he found himself in a growing climate of intense American patriotism.⁶ This saw the public display of numerous war posters and many military parades following the President's call to arms on 2 April 1917, and the official declaration of war against Germany on 6 April. Duchamp was associated with the Dada movement, predominantly a group of artists based in Zurich, with satellite activities in other centres including Hanover, Cologne, Berlin, and New York. The New York Dada Group developed, in Michael R. Taylor's words, 'a distinct set of strategies to express their deep-seated antipathy toward the barbaric war in Europe and their opposition to the sacrosanct terms and traditions of oil painting, which they viewed as abhorrent and absurd—a curious conflation

- 3 Louise Jury, "'Fountain' most influential piece of modern art', *The Independent*, accessed 4 June, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/fountain-most-influential-piece-of-modern-art-673625.html>.
- 4 These persons include: Walter Arensberg, Joseph Stella, Alfred Stieglitz, Beatrice Wood, Louise Norton, and, potentially, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. It was crucial to ensure the identity of R. Mutt would remain unknown, and Duchamp could not be singled out by the Independents' Board.
- 5 The editors of *The Blind Man*, Duchamp, Arensberg, and Norton (Varèse) all helped contribute the text 'Buddha of the Bathroom' for the second issue of *The Blind Man*. An often-cited line reads, 'Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it.' Beatrice Wood also contributed a text, her eyewitness accounts (she both saw and engaged in various heated debates of the Independents' committee) were recorded by her and she later wrote these down in her memoir. These are a major source to inform and reconstruct the unfolding saga. See, Camfield, *Fountain*, 13–60, for a full reconstruction of the events.
- 6 In interview in 1967, Duchamp states, 'Yes, I left for a neutral country. You know since 1917 America had been in the war, and I had left France basically for lack of militarism. For lack of patriotism, if you wish. Cabanne: And you had fallen into worse patriotism! Duchamp: I had fallen into American patriotism, which was certainly worse'. Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 59.

of politics and painting'.⁷ Steiglitz's photograph depicts a readymade urinal *and* an oil painting, encoding the very antithesis of Taylor's observations of the Dada group. In reading each art piece in turn, this article seeks to highlight this seemingly odd pairing, and, in the context of the Great War, demonstrate how Duchamp and Hartley became, in different ways, displaced subjects and exiles away from 'home' during wartime.

* * *

As war escalated on the western front, the 28-year-old Marcel Duchamp left Europe on 6 June 1915. He could leave France relatively freely because he had been declared unfit for military service. Explaining in a letter to his New York-based sponsor, Walter Pach: 'I went through the Medical Board and am doomed to remain a civilian for the entire duration of the war. They said I was too sick to be a soldier. I am not too unhappy about this decision, as you'll well imagine'.⁸ If he had no love for war or its nationalistic ideologies, Duchamp's desperation to leave France was as much to get away from the artistic life in Paris. 'I am not going to New York I am leaving Paris', he wrote Pach: 'That's quite different. For long before the war, I already had a distaste for the artistic life I was involved in. It's quite the opposite of what I'm looking for. And so I tried, through the library, to escape from artists somewhat. Then with the war, my incompatibility with this milieu grew. I wanted to go away at all costs'.⁹ Leaving Paris was a decision to reject the environment of the Parisian Puteaux Cubists. Calvin Tomkins appraises Duchamp's attitudes to the war which received rebuke from his family and members of the public alike: '[Duchamp's] was not a highly tenable attitude in wartime Paris. Duchamp was "spared nothing in the way of malicious remarks", as he later confided to his friend Robert Lebel. Yvonne Duchamp-Villon, Raymond's wife, took it upon herself to reproach the younger brother for being "behind the lines", and there were occasions when strangers would spit at him in the street'.¹⁰

While war impoverished culture and the arts in Europe, America was seen as the new beacon of modernism. What Duchamp would unleash there forever altered how the artist's role is to be comprehended and creative acts and gestures defined. In New York, he became affiliated with a group of artists including the French émigré artists Francis Picabia, Albert Gleizes, and Jean Crotte, the Americans Man Ray, Joseph Stella, Beatrice Woods, Morton Livingston Schamberg, and the German artist, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. The years between 1915 and 1917 were experienced with relative freedom for those in New York art circles.¹¹ This changed with the declaration of war on Germany on 6 April 1917. Waves of propaganda and strict censorship followed, with recrimination for any individuals renouncing or commenting negatively on the war effort in public. Duchamp soon found his relative ease of living as an artist severely compromised. He was designated (F) for 'Foreigner' and could be drafted into the American military under emergency.

Duchamp sought escape again, leaving New York for the remote Argentinian capital of Buenos Aires. On 13 August 1918, he wrote a short letter to his close friend Henri-Pierre Roché: 'Off I go again', he wrote, 'it's getting to be a habit'.¹² The art historian T.J. Demos provides an analysis of Duchamp's peripatetic existence in his book *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* which covers in some detail the work Duchamp made in the war-years of 1913–18. Demos contends: 'Off I go again: the French—*Je m'éloigne encore*—is undoubtedly more suggestive than the English translation, expressing a distancing of the self and suggesting an internal mobility that travel may bring in its most transformative capacity'.¹³ Demos asserts that Duchamp's 'I'm distancing myself again' offers difference in as much as it 'is an expression that fractures being, divides it into subject and object, implying a crisis of identity in the age of its national consolidation'.¹⁴ Duchamp's decision to leave New York was, according to Demos, bound up in many complex reasons. He cites 'growing fatigue with his patrons, exasperation with the loss of the

7 Michael R. Taylor, "New York Dada", in *Dada*, ed. Leah Dickerman (New York: National Gallery of Art and D.A.P., 2006), 277.

8 Naumann and Obalk, eds. *Affect Marcel*, 30.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp—a Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 140. Raymond Duchamp-Villon was one of Marcel's elder brothers, the other being Jacques Villon. He joined them in Paris in 1904 to study painting, but would later fall-out over their involvement with the decision not to include his work in the Paris Indépendants of 1912. This episode helped fuel his disdain held toward the Puteaux Cubists.

11 'A lively art scene was established in New York from 1914 to 1918 ... [in] stark contrast to Europe where salons had been suspended, magazines disbanded, and many galleries closed. There was cause to think that while the Europeans were absorbed by the war, the time had come for America to assume leadership in art'. Camfield, *Fountain*, 16.

12 Naumann and Obalk, *Affect Marcel*, 57.

13 T.J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge Massachusetts & London: MIT Press, 2007), 74-75.

14 *Ibid.*

city's carefree energy and social dynamism owing to the encroaching war'.¹⁵ But, 'more than anything else it was the increasing claustrophobic atmosphere of the patriotic environment.... [H]e sought out a "neutral country" unencumbered by the pressures of patriotism, just as he had done earlier when he left France for New York'.¹⁶

It is from within this period and these geo-political contexts that the most influential work of art in the 20th century emerged: *Fountain*. It is many things to people. As a statement, it is less a work of art than it is a rejection of the retinal aesthetic in prevailing traditions of the cubist traditions after Cézanne. It is as much, in the spirit of Dada, an iconoclastic object to be admired as a declaration of total abhorrence in the faith man placed in technology and machines. And it is an object to test the very definitions of art: later, in the 1970s, it would underpin conceptual art and the Institutional Theory of Art. In 1917 the decision to test the principles of the Society carried with it the psychological displacement of an émigré leaving his home. This did not occur as a subject fleeing war, or being forced into exile, but by being at stark odds with the nationalistic groundswell that emerged in France. To better understand the direct effects of this displacement from Paris upon Duchamp's readymade, we need briefly to consider its origins.

* * *

It all began with a now famous comment made in the autumn of 1912 at Le salon de la locomotion aérienne. A quip, allegedly posed by Duchamp to the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși while looking at aeronautic designs: 'Painting's washed up,' Duchamp mused. 'Who'll do anything better than that propeller? Tell me, can you do that?'¹⁷

The propeller Duchamp referenced appealed to him due to its capacity for mechano-morphic representations, an iconography that would soon be developed by Dada artists. Significantly, the comment made to Brancuși would lead Duchamp to examine the everyday world in search of what he would later explain of its selection as a 'rendezvous with readymades', mass-produced objects which become artworks not because they are made by the artist's hand but because they are *selected* by the artist. It is this shift in attribute from technique to cerebral concept which is the most important to comprehend of Duchamp's contribution to modern art and the legacy of the readymade.

Less than twelve months later, Duchamp assembled his own propelling machine of sorts in his Paris atelier when he secured a bicycle wheel and fork and mounted them upside down on a kitchen stool. The wheel could be set spinning. It is still widely regarded as the first readymade even if he had yet to arrive at the term. Duchamp remarked of it in his later life:

The *Bicycle Wheel* is my first readymade, so much so that at first it wasn't even called a Readymade. It still had little to do with the idea of the Readymade. Rather, it had more to do with the idea of chance. In a way, it was simply letting things go by themselves and having a sort of created atmosphere in a studio, an apartment where you live. Probably, to help your ideas come out of your head. To set the wheel turning was very soothing, very comforting, a sort of opening of avenues on other things than material life of every day. I liked the idea of having a bicycle wheel in my studio. I enjoyed looking at it, just as I enjoy looking at the flames dancing in a fireplace. It was like having a fireplace in my studio, the movement of the wheel reminded me of the movement of the flames.¹⁸

When it came time to leave Paris, he did not take the *Bicycle Wheel* assemblage with him, but he could travel light with the new fire as a concept.¹⁹ His sister Suzanne Duchamp, overlooking its significance, would later throw the *Bicycle Wheel* out together with another object called *Bottle Rack* (1914), a utilitarian rack found in kitchens used to dry bottles. While the fate of these actions might at first seem problematic, they would soon present opportunities for Duchamp to exploit.

Soon after Duchamp left war-torn Europe, he sent a postcard home, crossing out the familiar image of the Bordeaux bridge, and adding an arrow pointing west to New York and a new life. On the back, he wrote: 'I cannot bring myself to start learning English from my little book. Very embarrassing, Marcel Duchamp'.²⁰ A small but absolutely honest and critical gesture, for it signalled a self-consciousness about leaving, to be confronted when arriving in New York without a strong grasp of English. Also, importantly, the postcard embodied the catalyst for a course of action; only when arriving in New York that he began to consider the differences in translation

15 *Ibid.*, 75.

16 *Ibid.*

17 This alleged question of Duchamp's to Brâncuși was first printed in the Exposition Catalog, '50 Ans d'Art Moderne', Bruxelles, 1958, and in *Clefs de l'art moderne* (Paris: la Table Ronde, 1955). Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (eds), *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 160.

18 Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2000), 588.

19 The small 'test glass' *Nine Malic Moulds* (1914–15) and a folio containing his notes and drawings for 'The Large Glass' which he would resume work on when settled in New York.

20 Jennifer Gough-Cooper, and Jacques Caumont, eds., 'Ephemerides', in *Duchamp: Life and Work*, ed. Pontus Hultenn (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), unpaginated, entry for 8 June 1915.

between French and English, exploiting this as titles for his readymade objects. Hence the passage away from home and Duchamp's acculturation process between 1915–17, for which learning a new language was a critical part, emerges as fundamentally integral to that new arrival of a conceptualist art form in New York. To apply seemingly unrelated words as titles to familiar objects encourages new ways of looking at and thinking about those objects. Naming a urinal *Fountain* necessarily suggests a new way of thinking about that utilitarian object.

* * *

Fountain emerged in April 1917 on the occasion of the first exhibition of the American Society of Independent Artists. The society's purpose was to stage annual exhibitions not unlike those of the Paris Salon des Indépendents. French émigré artists were significant to the establishment of the Independents including Duchamp, Picabia, Gleizes, and Crotti. 'All had made their way to New York each in his way a refugee from the devastating war in Europe'.²¹ Calvin Tomkins provides relevant context for the Society's establishment: 'European art had been shut down by the war, Paris was under siege, and any number of artists and critics believed that America, as Duchamp had said in one of his newspaper interviews, was destined to forge the new art of the twentieth century'.²²

Newspaper headlines were dominated by America's declaration of war on Germany, but 'the Independents secured considerable attention, peppering the public with press releases stressing the democracy, the vast size, and the importance of the exhibition—1,200 artists represented by 2,125 works stretching over almost two miles of panels'.²³ *Fountain* was not one of them. Other means to make it public were to be found. When photographed by Stieglitz it was placed upon a wooden plinth with the original exhibition submission card still attached—damage to this card suggesting at some stage it was re-affixed—and lit in such a way to transcend its utilitarian function to something not unlike a Buddha. For its publication in *The Blind Man*, the work was indeed

renamed 'Buddha of the Bathroom' and 'a much larger audience had the opportunity to see *Fountain* and read something by way of explanation and defence of it'.²⁴

* * *

... [T]hose huge cuirassiers of the Kaiser's special guard – all in white – white leather breeches skin tight – high plain enamel boots – those gleaming, blinding medieval breast plates of silver and brass ... inspiring helmets with the imperial eagle, and the white manes hanging down – there was six foot of youth under all this garniture ... that is how I got it – and it went into an abstract picture of soldiers riding into the sun....²⁵

Seventy-two years later, in 1989, William Camfield with Francis Naumann reidentified the backdrop in the Stieglitz photograph as Hartley's *The Warriors* (1913), a work that, unlike the urinal *Fountain*, did survive the Great War (Fig. 2). When seeing the full painting the reader can identify the close formal composition the painting shares with the urinal; Hartley's work also may have been chosen because of America's very recent declaration of war, or because the sense of battle in the painting appropriately reflected Duchamp's test of the Independents committee.

In his authoritative reconstruction of the events, William Camfield writes, 'It seems to have been Stieglitz who elected to place *Fountain* in front of Marsden Hartley's painting with fortuitous visual and intellectual links to that readymade'.²⁶ The following seeks to corroborate this view and highlight its implications.

Due to its depiction of soldiers astride horses the painting might easily be misrepresented when *The Warriors* was never intended as a celebration of war, nor to depict war favourably. As many historians and commentators familiar with Hartley's work claim, the artist had been drawn to the pre-war pageantry due to its visceral presence in the streets of Berlin, with the painting embracing Kaiser Wilhelm II's pre-war Berlin of 1913 and that centre's widespread tolerance of homosexuality.²⁷

Where the metonymical relationships between Hartley's painting and the urinal are analysed by Paul B. Franklin in his essay 'Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's

21 Camfield, *Fountain*, 14.

22 Tomkins, *Duchamp*, 179.

23 Camfield, *Fountain*, 20.

24 *Ibid.*, 37.

25 Cited in Patricia McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine": Marsden Hartley, Gay Identity, and the Wilhelmine German Military', *Art Journal* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 67.

26 Camfield, *Fountain*, 55.

27 McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine'", 68. She writes, 'As Hartley confirmed in his letters at the time, the imperial guard was in perpetual motion about the city, and their displays were intoxicating for him. He loved the pageantry, but he also loved the show of force and virility. His German paintings capitalise on this quality of Wilhelmine culture and make use of the male power that the military in Berlin extended'.

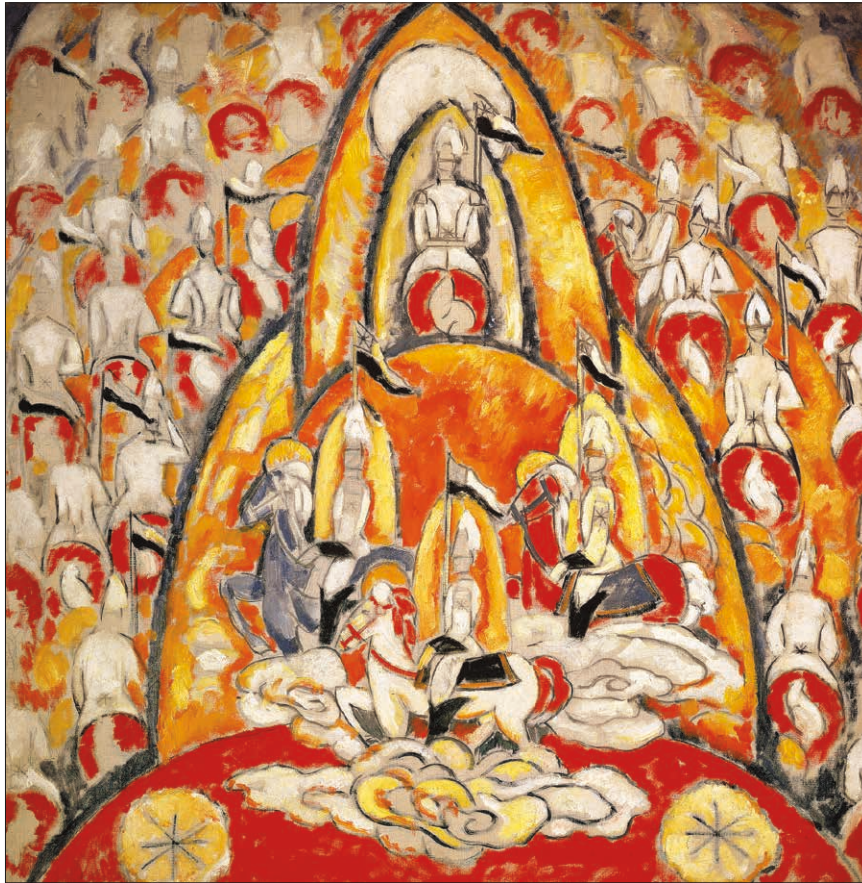


Figure 2. Marsden Hartley, *The Warriors*, 1913. Oil on copper. 121.29cm x 120.65cm. Private collection.

Fountain and the Art of the Queer Art History',²⁸ my intentions here are to consider how the urinal and the painting are both expressions of displaced subjects in wartime, and represent a contestation of the politics of nationalism in New York Dada of this time. The dual consequences of subjects belonging and being displaced away from home, as complex psychologies and emotions, are bound within the photographic construction of *Fountain* in 1917. On the one hand, Duchamp left Europe to find a home in America, where his quite radical step to nominate a male urinal as a work of art to the Society of Independent Artists' exhibition was suppressed. On the other, Hartley, in leaving America for Berlin, found means to paint a true expression of himself in his art. When, due to the outbreak of war, he was forced to return 'home' to America he rediscovered the pressure to conceal the true nature and subject of himself and his work. These factors were bound-up in the ideologies of American nationalism censoring German culture, and, secondly, the dominant culture suppressing and outlawing homosexuality.

The correspondence between Hartley and Stieglitz in this period is a vital source to shed light on artistic differences. In one letter of early November 1912, Hartley wrote to Stieglitz of his emerging views of the Paris art world; in it he exposed Duchamp as an intellectual and not yet a fully-fledged artist.

Aside from Renoir and Cézanne there is little else to stir one but Picasso and Rousseau and it is in communion with these spirits that I am working.... Picasso proceeds in his splendid fashion producing always an art product.... There are several new men – Picabia, Juan Gris – Duchamp – who as yet do not show me they are artists. They are all thinkers, but art goes only a certain way with the intellect and then demands the vision. I am working hard and well from the same basic point of view being like them an issue out of Picasso – and yet I believe I shall get – something which is closer to true vision – true art intuition.²⁹

28 Paul B. Franklin, 'Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of the Queer Art History', *Oxford Art Journal* 23, No. 1 (2000): 25–50.

29 James Timothy Voorhies, ed., *My Dear Stieglitz: Letters of Marsden Hartley and Alfred Stieglitz, 1912–1915* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 39.

These sentiments would appear to be an antithesis of the cerebral conceptions Duchamp sought throughout his career, heightened the moment he arrived in New York. How the two ever ended up in the same image would seem a conflation of polar views, but both men's displacement from home register unequivocally.³⁰

Painted in a mixture of Cubist and German Expressionist styles, *The Warriors* exudes masculinity, men on horses are depicted from a rear view, the men and horses are heading away into battle, but the flanks of the horses upon which the men sit are pronounced, repeated in formation throughout the painting. Wherever one casts their eye over the painting, the gaze is returned by rear-end views of men sitting astride the flanks of horses. Patricia McDonnell explains that: 'Hartley's paintings of the German military and its garb play out a network of complicated social, sexual, and gender constructs then strongly contested in imperial Germany. They express Hartley's gay identity as well as his take on the dominating cult of manliness in Wilhelmine German culture'.³¹ Before the 1960s gay rights movement, the homosexual aspects of artists' lives were conducted in secrecy and unable to be outwardly celebrated; these dynamics were a subject that became coded into their creative work. McDonnell asserts this as: '[an] invention of codes, of discrete vocabularies that could simultaneously reveal and conceal. Only then could the average viewer pass over gay content without notice, while viewers sensitised to the signs of a gay aesthetic could read it affectively'.³² She argues that Hartley dropped several of what George Chauncey terms 'hairpins' when depicting German military uniforms in pre-First World War Berlin, professing 'both his homosexuality and his love of the German cult of manliness'.³³ Chauncey's term refers to 'a layered coding' in modernism, an identification of homosexuality easily understood by those in the know, or knowing what to look for. By placing *The Warriors* as

backdrop to *Fountain*, Stieglitz's actions make sense when considered similarly as 'dropping a hairpin', alerting those in the know to the coding of homosexuality in art and of its covert reception at this time.

* * *

According to McDonnell, 'the Berlin that Hartley knew in this century was singularly tolerant of gay life.... Shortly after settling there, he reported that he had 'every sense of being at home among the Germans'. He felt at home there because he discovered an essential side of himself reflected in a vibrant and validating gay subculture'.³⁴ And James Timothy Voorhies writes, Hartley celebrated 'the beauties of the exciting metropolis [where he] would also have found a great appreciation for the city's tolerance of its prevalent homosexual sub-culture.... It was in Berlin that Hartley most revelled in its masculine orientation and dominant military atmosphere'.³⁵ Hartley, himself, confided to Stieglitz in a letter dated 8 November 1915, sent a month prior to returning to New York: 'I shall be glad to see you all—and I know I shall be glad to get back to Berlin again. It is singular that I have my artistic and personal peace here—but it is so and I shall live here some time I fancy. I must make business plans somehow for the same freedom I have had as it has proven the only way for me. You will see a great advance personally and aesthetically'.³⁶

It is clear from the above that Hartley was hopeful to return to Berlin after the war was over. It expresses his convictions having matured as an artist in Berlin, and makes transparent he would seek the same freedoms in New York as he had found and experienced and enjoyed in Berlin.³⁷ It is perhaps symptomatic of the psychology of the 'home' in modernity. Nikos Papastergiadis and

30 Tomkins, *Duchamp*, 39. For his part, Stieglitz, according to Calvin Tomkins, held an 'ivory tower attitude toward art, his belief in esthetic "purity", and his dictatorial self-righteousness made it very difficult for him to respond to the new, iconoclastic breezes from Europe. He thought Duchamp was a charlatan when they first met, later on he revised his opinion and said he greatly regretted not having shown his work' (167). Possibly the reason why he agreed to the commission to photograph *Fountain*. Duchamp and Hartley, themselves, are known to have met in the spring of 1914 in Paris.

31 McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine'", 62.

32 *Ibid.*, 65.

33 McDonnell writes, 'The French Surrealist and gay author, Jean Cocteau, affirmed that this kind of layered coding was very much at work in the period of early modernism. He said, "Homosexuals recognise each other.... The mask dissolves, and I would venture to discover my kind between the lines of the most innocent book"'. George Chauncey calls these discreet flags of identification 'dropped hairpins' in his 1994 book, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay World, 1890–1940*. McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine'", 65.

34 McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine'", 65.

35 Voorhies, *My Dear Stieglitz*, 4.

36 *Ibid.*, 201. During his time in Berlin, Hartley secured two shows, one in that city and another in Frankfurt. He was confident that on his return home to New York he would be accepted as having broken into the European scene and be regarded as part of the expat American set.

37 Nikos Papastergiadis and Peter Lyssiotis, 'The Home in Modernity' [online], *Transition* No. 56, 1997, 65. This source is included in Christina Barton's brilliant analysis of two of New Zealand's most famous expatriates forced to navigate home(s) in modernity, from the colony and periphery to the centre: Francis Hodgkins's story 1901 to 1913, and Barrie Bates leaving New Zealand in 1959 and becoming Billy Apple on 22 November 1962. *The Expatriates* (Wellington: Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi, 2005).

Peter Lyssiotis explain: 'The answer to the dilemmas of the migrant experience is not just to pack up and go home. Few who have left their native village and headed to a foreign city retain the illusion of a triumphal return. It is not just the chilling thought that their place of origin will have changed, leaving them still out of place, but there is also the wish to claim something for themselves within the new city'.³⁸ Before leaving Hartley's 'new city' on the *SS Rotterdam* in December 1915 bound back to America, he had arranged for the shipping of paintings to New York, but these would be held up at the border for nearly a year. Hartley was able to retrieve his *War Motif* series in March 1916, and these were exhibited by Stieglitz the following month at 291 together with work he completed soon after arriving in New York.³⁹

The reception to his work in New York was mixed. The German Empire was not only the perpetrator of the Great War but was the enemy of the American people. Many German nationalists living in America anglicised their surnames such were the pressures felt. Any paintings with German iconography simply could not be easily tolerated, let alone German iconography painted by a homosexual artist. Of their impending reception, Michael Cirigliano II writes in his essay 'Marsden Hartley and Wilfred Owen: Queer Voices of Memorial in Wartime': 'Just as "Portrait of a German Officer" is coded with layers of meaning that Hartley could not otherwise communicate at a time of intolerance toward homosexuals, so too did he need to mask the intention of his German paintings upon his return to the United States in 1915. Unfortunately for Hartley, paintings depicting Iron Crosses and other German military insignia were met with a chilling reception by New York audiences'.⁴⁰ According to various sources, a number of critics focused on the formal and aesthetic merit in the paintings. Indeed, rather than declare what is so evident in his letters to Stieglitz of his experiences being at home in Berlin, Hartley, perhaps under Stieglitz's influence, placated audiences by writing in his exhibition catalogue encountered by visitors to the show: 'There is no hidden symbolism whatsoever in them.... Things under observation, just pictures any day, any hour. I have expressed only what I have seen. They are merely consultations of the eye ... my notion of the purely pictorial'.⁴¹ The 'notion of the purely pictorial'

does, in fact, conceal other significance. Between 1913 and 1917 there were many varied and complex 'forces' at play, all influences upon the selection, production, and indeed constructions of *Fountain*.

The Stieglitz photograph is a record of the fate of two artists who left their countries of birth at a time when the nation state is, in T.J. Demos's words, being consolidated by the First World War: 'nationalism was resurgent, reasserting geographical borders, regional communities, purified languages, and a corresponding cultural chauvinism'.⁴² By leaving their respective homes Duchamp and Hartley found certain new freedom for creative expression and outputs. Here, the ideal of a security of 'home', the promissory to protect a country for its nation's subjects (on which many wars are entered and engaged), in effect grants to these artists experiences as trans-nationalist subjects. Stieglitz's photographic commission of *Fountain* encodes the effects of these dynamics. If leaving their country of birth provided to Duchamp and Hartley different freedom of expression, it is not at all straightforward. As with other implications of the Great War raging in Europe, the reconstruction of their experiences and of the events in this article should not be understood as a neat category in the narratives of art history. And here, too, is a lesson from the readymade of 1917.

Fountain oscillates, always in a state of new 'becoming' between its prior understanding of physical function and a new conceptual meaning—from familiar knowledge of an object's worth and value based on its known function into a new object that emerges as a work of art—it is an object that is never at rest. Even today, *Fountain's* indexical referents in the world are unstable. Not only is it turned through 90 degrees rendering its utility pointless, its title diverts the viewer away from material form to cerebral suggestion. Neither can we forget the male urinal, both androgynous and a homoerotic thing, was suppressed by a committee who represented the collective wisdom of a dominant cultural orthodox where power resided. It is important to recall that *Fountain* in 1917 did not survive as a material object. While they enact and do other things for the neo-avant-garde, the replicas of *Fountain* made in the mid-1960s carry none of the political moment of 1917. It is the Stieglitz photograph which carries the legacy of 1917 forward and with it the indexical and transgressive power of alterity.

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38 Nikos Papastergiadis and Peter Lyssiotis, 'The Home in Modernity', 65.

39 *Exhibition of Paintings by Marsden Hartley* (April 04–May 22, 1916).

40 Michael Cirigliano II, 'Marsden Hartley and Wilfred Owen: Queer Voices of Memorial in Wartime', MetMuseum, accessed May 13, 2019, <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2017/marsden-hartley-wilfred-owen-world-war-i-#!/#3>.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Demos, *Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*, 75.