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Da Da!

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Includes films by:

Marcel Duchamp

Hans Richter

David Lynch

Charlie Chaplin

Robert Breer

George Landow

Joyce Wieland

Anna Thew

René Clair

Mack Swain

Bruce Conner

Ron Rice

Birgit & Wilhelm Hein

John Smith

Stefan & Francesca Themerson

Sidney Peterson

Jeff Keen

Andrew Cotting

Kurt Kren

Larry Semon

George Saxon

Selected by Michael O'Pray and Jeremy Welsh

Videos by:

Ivan Unwin

Pictorial Heroes

William Wegman

Akiko Hada

Sluik & Kurpershoek

Colorada Video Art Center/

Lydia Lunch

DADADADADADA

The Dada movement which erupted between 1913-1917, became one of the mythical moments of twentieth century art and culture. Not only did it utterly and irrevocably infect Western art from that moment on, but it also re-emerged persistently in different guises, typically as an anti-art sensibility in the 1950s American Underground cinema, the French Situationiste movement of the 50s and 60s, the Punk aesthetic of the 70s and more recently in certain varieties of post-modernism. Its radicalism is constantly being recuperated. As the avant-gardes seem to collapse into orthodoxy, Dada's original energies are tapped once again, its destructive aims reharnessed and its political nihilism readopted.

The explosion of artistic activity in the cafes, cabarets and night clubs of Berlin, New York and Zurich between 1913 -1917 represented an intense provocation to the art world and society in general. Its anarchistic anti-Establishment stance was very much a nihilistic response to the horrors of World War I. This movement was quite meaninglessly named Dada.

The original Dada movement attacked all traditional arts - painting, poetry and theatre. It attacked the art-object as unique, authorial and as somehow sacred. It was also aware of the commodity-value of the art object, its ability to accrue financial value and become a possession of the ridiculed bourgeois class.

Thus the Dada artists were interested in art forms based on performance where nothing survived to be bought and sold. The film as mechanical reproduction and as popular cultural form would seem ideal to the

Dada spirit, yet very few films are uncontroversially Dada - Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* perhaps, Clair's *Entr'acte*, Man Ray's *Return to Reason* (unavailable in this country at present) and Richter's *Ghosts before Breakfast*.

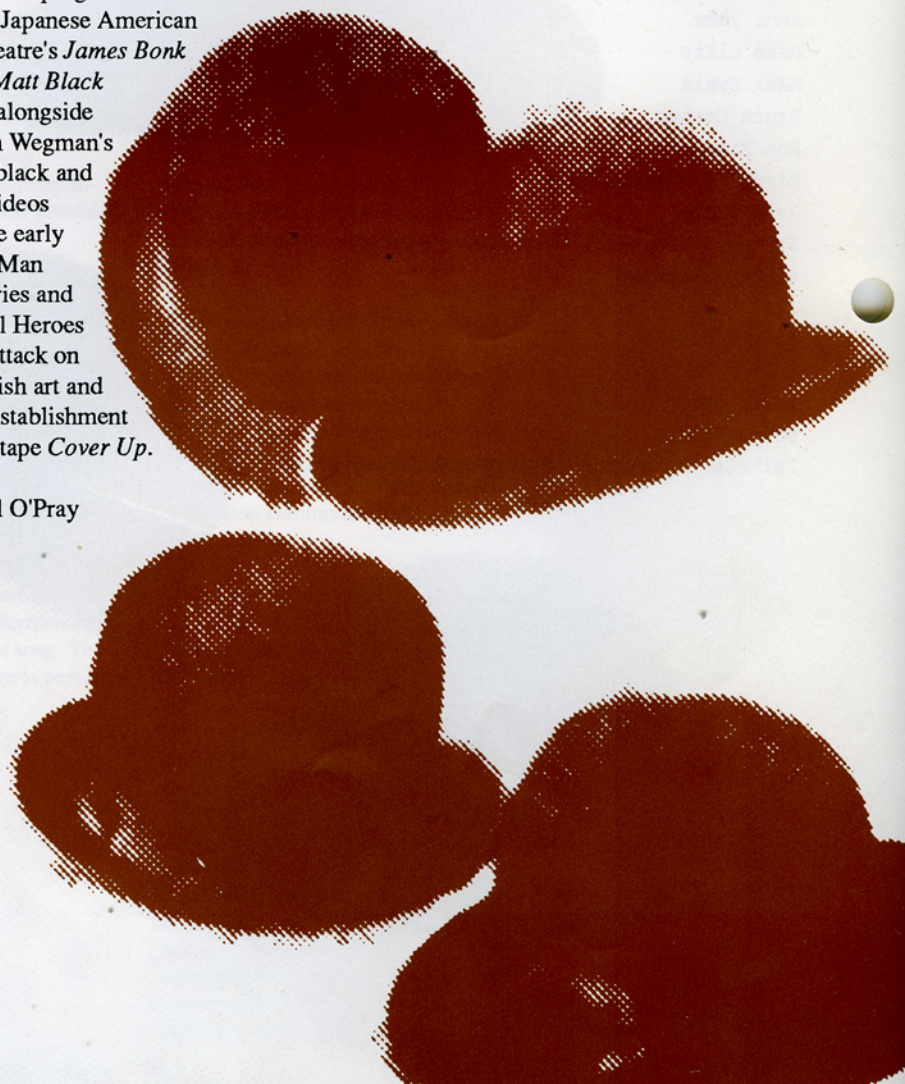
Dada innovatively mixed performance, music, poetry, photography, painting, cabaret, music hall and sheer nonsense into a potent and dangerous brew which has had a persistent and subversive influence on Western culture since. It encapsulated the anti art strand which has survived in many subsequent art movements from the surrealism of Bunuel and Breton to the junk constructions of Bruce Conner, to the Fluxus influenced work of Nam June Paik, Robert Rauschenberg and Joseph Beuys. In film, the American underground movement absorbed many of its ideas - an anarchic wit, a strategic irresponsibility, a refusal of any formal art conventions and an adventurous mixing of media.

The 70s punk movement was a reworking of Dada's shock-tactics in its use of dress, language and music; the "happenings" and street performances of the 60s largely associated with the Fluxus movement were Dada inspired, so were the paintings and performance work of such as Jasper Johns and Bob Rauschenberg. The American "underground" films of Andy Warhol, Jack Smith, Ken Jacobs and Bruce Conner owed much of its radicalism, humour and sexual subversion to Dada, as did the intensely physical and brutal performance work of Gunther Brus and Valie Export in Germany and Austria in the 60s.

This touring programme of films traces the influence of Dada's energies, obsessions, humour and imagery. It includes the early classic Dada films of Marcel Duchamp, Rene Clair and Hans Richter plus the influential knockabout silent comedies of the Keystone Kops and Charlie Chaplin; animation by Robert Breer and the bizarre films of David 'Eraserhead' Lynch plus Dada influenced work of British filmmakers Jeff Keen, John Smith and Anna Thew. The films of Bruce Conner and Ron Rice represent the American underground film movement.

The video programme features Akiko Hada and the Japanese American Toy Theatre's *James Bonk 007 in Matt Black Finger* alongside William Wegman's classic black and white videos from the early 1970s 'Man Ray' series and Pictorial Heroes acidic attack on the British art and media establishment in their tape *Cover Up*.

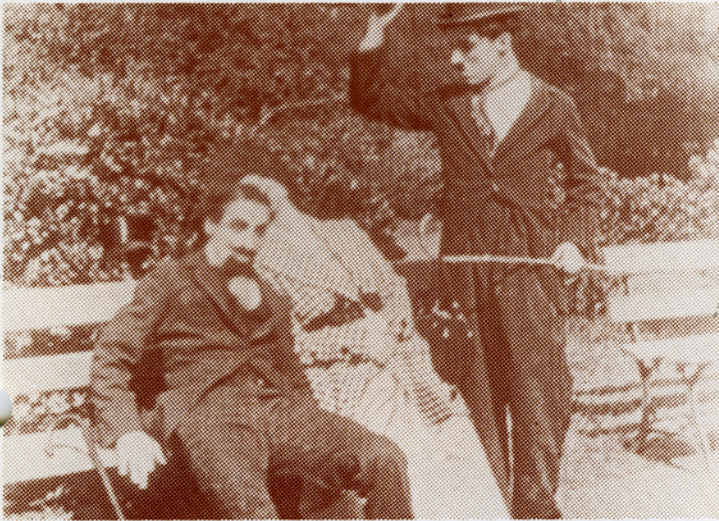
Michael O'Pray



PROGRAMME 1

In the Park (USA 1915)

sil Charlie Chaplin 8mins
Chaplin in a knockabout comedy consisting of remakes of scenes from various Keystone 'park' pictures. The anarchy and latent anti-social behaviour of Chaplin is expressed when he upsets a courting couple, fights two tramps and a policeman and then throws everyone into a lake!



Entr'acte (France 1924)

Rene Clair 16mins
The classic dada film made by Clair, commissioned by Francis Picabia as a cinematic interlude for a dada ballet with contributions by Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Georges Auric. It shows the influence of Chaplin and Max Sennett and is a forerunner of Monty Python in its famous funeral sequence.



The House That Jack Built

George Saxon 1986 7 mins
A burlesque, in the form of a mixture of songs and pantomime using a string of characters in a comic circus

which is not only funny but a comment on our own sinister "Victorian" times.

Recreation (USA 1956-7)

Robert Breer 2mins
Paintings, found images and objects single-framed lends this film a manic non-sense quality. The text by Noel Burch lends it the quality of a dada litany.

Fistfight (USA 1964)

Robert Breer 11mins
Used in the first New York performances of Stockhausen's musical event 'Originale', it was first an autobiographical film. It is very much part of Breer's collaborations with New York artists who were associated with the Fluxus movement and were consciously breaking down barriers between media, creating 'events' and happenings.

The Alphabet (USA 1968)

David Lynch 4mins
Lynch's work has been a consistent homage to dada and surrealist cinema. Alphabet, his first short film,

is a fairly wild mix of live-action and animation. Described by Lynch as "a little nightmare about the fear connected with learning", this is an archetypal dada exercise in cultural critique.

New Improved

Institutional Quality (USA 1976)

George Landow 10mins
A bizarre sortie into the world of educational tests involving meaningless, contradictory and impossible-to-follow directions. Landow's relationship to the world as expressed in his films is always critical finding the absurd at every point.

Ratlife and Diet in North America (Can 1968)

Joyce Wieland 15mins
Wieland's film uses rats to make a series of statements about the political concerns of the late 60s - Third World revolutions, American imperialism, state authoritarianism, political repression and ecological crisis. Mekas described it as "a parable, a satire, an adventure movie".

PROGRAMME 2

Love Speed and Thrills

(USA 1915)
Mack Swain 11mins
The Keystone Kops were enormously liked by the dadaists and surrealists. This boisterous comedy involves cat-chasing, cliff edges, amorous rivalry and a complex chase sequence.



formal. Richter was a leading dadaist who believed dada was the necessary tearing down of art prior to its rational reconstruction in the constructivist aesthetic.

Ghosts Before Breakfast (Ger 1928)

Hans Richter 5mins
A classic dada film in its irreverent fantasy of a world where hats, ties and coffee cups rebel against the reason of men and nature. Aided and abetted by Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray.

A Movie (USA 1959)

Bruce Conner 10mins
Conner's classic film celebrating the joys of found-footage montage but shot through with a savage black humour as a stream of images from real-life disasters, second-rate Hollywood films and stag movies depict a deeply disturbing view of the violence and horror of contemporary American society.

Senseless (USA 1961?)

Ron Rice 28mins
Dadaist in its improvisation, apparent formlessness and depiction of Underground decadent life-style (sex, drugs and mantras!), Rice's film is a classic of the American underground cinema. With its rich colour, swirling superimpositions and druggy characters (including Jack Smith with false moustache), Rice creates a rich impression of the fantasies, desires and sexuality of the underbelly of American society.

Blurt Roll 2 (UK 1983)

Anna Thew 5mins
A frantic-paced collage of lettering and fragmented texts exemplary of a latter-day dada inspired approach to film-making which nonetheless contains "confessions and traces of a painted past".

Kali Film (Ger 1988)

Birgit & Wilhelm Hein 11mins
A manic montage of found-footage scenes of women enacting acts of breathtaking aggression taken from low-budget Hollywood sex and violence movies. Women, literally, fight back with classic dada bad-taste humour.

OM (UK 1987)

John Smith 4mins
A delightful throwaway one-joke film typifying John Smith's off-beat humour and his contribution to the dadaist notion of the meaningless!

Rhythm 21 (Ger 1921)

Hans Richter 4mins
An early abstract film which points up the seemingly paradoxical fascination of the dadaists with the

PROGRAMME 3**The Stuntman (USA 1927)***Larry Semon 8mins*

Semon was the most severe of the early silent film comics, loved by the surrealists and dadaists for his lack of sentiment and aggressive, almost materialist approach, to the world and its objects. The Stuntman is in the Max Sennett tradition and has Semon dressed as a woman, becoming a stuntman for a film company and being fired at by a battery of guns.

Anemic Cinema (Fr 1926)*Marcel Duchamp 6mins*

Duchamp was the supreme Dadaist. With its optical tricks and sexual punning texts, Anemic Cinema displays the potential and artistic complexity of the original Dada movement.

Adventures of a Good Citizen*(Pol 1938)**Stefan and Franciszka Themerson 10mins*

The forerunner of Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* but in a much more Dada spirit. The film comes out of the still largely unknown Polish avant-garde of the 20s and 30s. The banners in the film read **DOWN WITH WALKING BACKWARDS! THE SKIES WILL FALL! EVERYBODY FORWARD MARCH!** etc.

Petrified Dog (USA 1949)*Sidney Peterson 22mins*

Described as akin to Alice in Wonderland meeting Rene Magritte in a San Francisco dream, Peterson's film is typical of his dadaist-influenced output on the American West Coast in the 1940s. A series of bizarre events loosely connected but all informed by a playfulness and infectious glee.

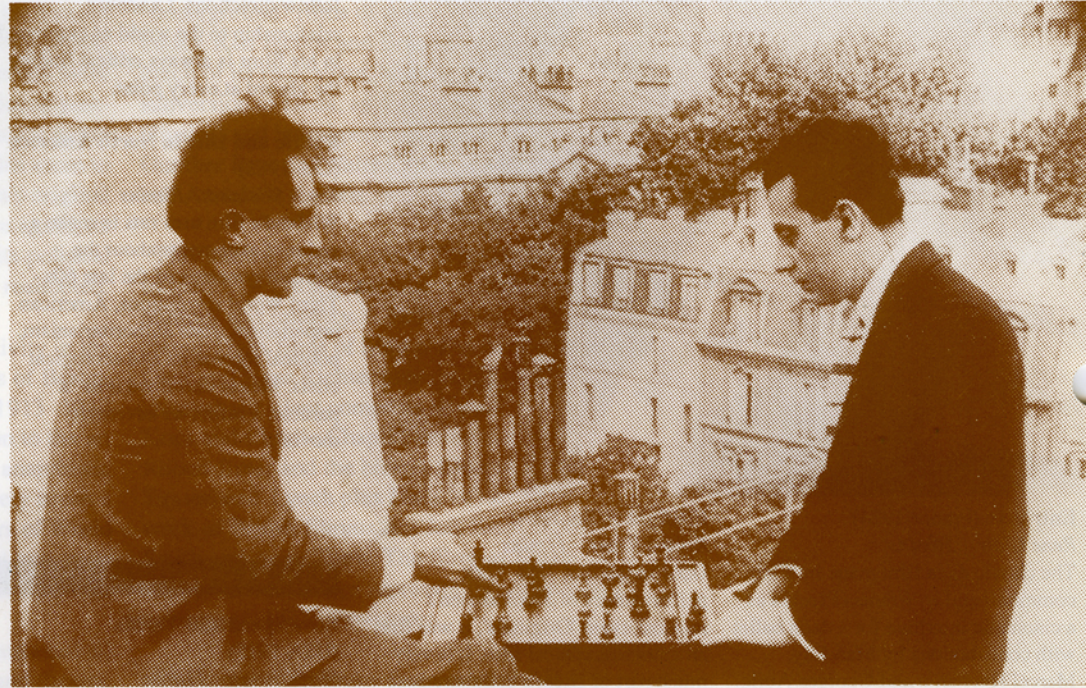
PROGRAMME 4 (Video)**The Light Station (UK 1981)***Ivan Unwin 9mins*

Using the qualities of super 8 film and video post production Unwin creates a dark, mysterious, poetic world of intriguing images. A sense of imminent destruction and violence inhabits the film but undercut by a knowing irony.

musical into an hilarious epic of dadaist proportions.

Worker and Tool (Holl 1983)*Sluik and Kurpershoek 14mins*

Owing much to punk and violent performance art, *Worker and Tool* involves crude rhythmic music made with machines, sheets of metal and a large expressionist wall painting of a hammer. Objects are ritualistically smashed and there is a dadaist attack on the spectator throughout.

**TV (Aus 1967)***Kurt Kren 6mins*

Kren said of the film that "it is more interesting to be thoroughly exasperated than merely distracted by some boringly entertaining mediocrity". In true Duchampian-style, the formal meets the pointless.

Cartoon Theatre of Dr Gaz*(UK 1977-9)**Jeff Keen 12mins*

Keen is the arch English dada/surrealist film-maker. Animation, cut-ups, found-footage, collage and a vibrant humour combine with the anti-Establishment spirit of Dada.

Klipperty Klopp (1984)*Andrew Cotting 10mins*

A post-punk piece of maniacal film-making involving a performance in field and a very tuneless song. The film's seeming innocence is pervaded by despair

The Cover Up (UK 1986)*Pictorial Heroes 10mins*

A "TV Personality" in the guise of a roving reporter takes us on a trip around a derelict inner city landscape. He harangues us about the political state of the nation. Both witty and emotional, the tape issues a broadside against contemporary social values

The Best of Wegman (USA 1970-8)*William Wegman 20mins*

Classics of video art, these tapes are made very simply on black and white, and involve Wegman and his dog Man Ray in a series of wry sketches pitched somewhere between a television commercial and performance art.

Lydia Lunch Interviewed*(USA 1988)*

Colorado Video Art Centre 11mins
Punk musician, poet, cultural terrorist and latter-day dadaist, Lydia Lunch, faces camera and answers off-screen questions about America, suicide, sex and art.

James Bond in Matt Black Finger*(UK 1988)**Akiko Hada 10mins*

With a cast of wind-up toys and plastic monsters staged by the Japanese American Toy Theatre of London, Akiko Hada merges adventure movie and Hollywood

Broadsheet edited by Michael O'Pray

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