
MARCEL DUCHAMP

PORTE-BOUTEILLES

PARIS MARAIS

14 Oct 2016 - 14 Jan 2017

**Opening: Thursday, October 20, 2016: 6.30-8.30pm**

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce a forthcoming exhibition featuring the most important sculpture by Marcel Duchamp to be on the market for many years. The *Porte-bouteilles* (*Bottle Rack*), dated 1959, is considered one of the most influential sculptures from the 20th century. The exhibition curated around this seminal work will open in the Paris Marais gallery on 20 October 2016, a year which also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the term *readymade*, that Duchamp first coined in 1916 in a letter to his sister Suzanne.

The exhibition features Marcel Duchamp's *Porte-bouteilles* from 1959, the year Robert Rauschenberg bought it for his personal collection – where it remained until it was passed on to the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation states: "The Board made the strategic decision to sell this work, which will allow us to create an endowment. Having a more diverse portfolio of cash investments and art will allow us to focus on our core legacy. In this coming year we will be launching the research towards our Catalogue Raisonné - a key project for the Foundation." Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac has been chosen by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation to place the sculpture in a public institution allowing for ongoing public viewing and scholarship.

The iconic *Porte-bouteilles* was considered by Duchamp to be his first *readymade*. For Duchamp, the *readymade* meant the transition from what he called "retinal art" to an intellectual approach of his practice. As André Breton wrote in 1938 in his *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, a *readymade* is an "ordinary object promoted to the dignity of an art object by the mere choice of the artist".

The first time Duchamp used the term *readymade* was in 1916 in a letter sent from New York to Paris, addressed to his sister Suzanne where he gave instructions to recuperate a bottle dryer he formerly purchased at the Grand Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville and left in his studio since then. Suzanne was asked to write a specific inscription and sign it, but as history knows, this step was never realized, and the work remained as an idea.

After Duchamp left Europe and moved to New York in 1915, he became a major figure in the city's art scene, influencing many collectors, curators and especially a new generation of artists. Robert Rauschenberg met Marcel Duchamp in 1953 at the Stable Gallery, the two of them, along with Jasper Johns, became close friends. Sometime between spring 1957 and fall 1958, Johns and Rauschenberg visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art to see its exceptional Duchamp collection. It is therefore not surprising that the inventor of the *readymades* saw a natural filiation in their works when declaring in *Time* magazine six years later: "Abstract expressionism was not intellectual at all for me. It is under the yoke of the retinal; I see no grey matter there. Jasper Johns, one of our lights, and Rauschenberg are much more than that; they have intelligence in addition to painting facilities."

In 1959, Duchamp and Rauschenberg took part in a group exhibition titled *Art and the Found Object* at the Time-Life Reception Center in New York, for which Duchamp decided to include his *Porte-bouteilles*. He asked Man Ray if he could borrow the 1935-36 version, which was supposedly kept in the photographer's collection in Paris. However Man Ray had lost the object, thus Duchamp encouraged him to buy another one at the Grand Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville and to ship the object to New York. Rauschenberg then acquired the piece for his own collection.

Soon after purchasing this sculpture, he loaned it to the MoMA in New York for the groundbreaking exhibition *The Art of Assemblage* (1961), which travelled to the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Arts and to the San Francisco Museum of Art. Since then, this work has been exhibited in important institutions such as the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, the Menil Collection in Houston, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Together with the *Porte-bouteilles* the exhibition will show a selection of drawings by Marcel Duchamp as well as other works that relate directly to the object. A drawing offered by the artist to Rauschenberg after a symposium at MoMA in 1960 will be presented. Other loans comprise an edition of *The Green Box* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*) (1934) and of *The Box in a Valise* (1964) including original reproductions of the *Porte-bouteilles*. A hand-written letter by Robert Rauschenberg describing his acquisition and the technical drawing of the object made by an industrial draftsman and supervised by the artist for the production of replicas in 1964 will provide further input to the understanding of the work.

A fully illustrated catalogue of the exhibition will be published with newly commissioned texts by Cecile Debray, curator in charge of modern collections at the Musée national d'art moderne/Centre Pompidou in Paris, and Paul B. Franklin, specialist on Marcel Duchamp and editor in chief of *Étant donné Marcel Duchamp*.