

*Marcel Duchamp Information*, 1909, 2014

Letterpress on pearl cotton paper

sheet: 13 × 20 inches (33.02 × 50.80 cm)

image: 10 × 17 inches (25.40 × 43.18 cm)

In 1908 Duchamp made two pen drawings, both versions of the same image. The first, called *Information*, is the same scale as this. A second version was made called *News*, in a smaller scale. The works were done in the style of Boutet de Monvel, about whom Duchamp once wrote, was “one of the most boring artists.” As Richard Hamilton wrote in his monograph on Duchamp in 1966: “The drawing demonstrates M.D.’s flexible attitude to style during 1907 and 1908. In this case, the influence of Boutet de Monvel is not so much the outcome of an admiration for de Monvel as a mark of restlessness in search of modes. The quest was not necessarily among the avant-garde – the most boring of Salon artists could prompt a new direction. Several works of the time are reactionary in this inquisitive sense.”

It is a replica of a bland yet popular artist of the time. I find it significant that it is not a copy of a specific work by de Monvel, but just a copy of his “style.” It is unlike Duchamp’s other early work owing much to Cezanne and Impressionism, it instead resembles his attempts at illustration, perhaps given his older brother Jacques Villon’s success in that field. But perhaps it is more purposeful. Perhaps it is the beginning of his great distancing. A distancing away from one’s self. A distancing away from authorial truth.

Much of Duchamp’s work was a kind of commercialization, a tokening of his own work, sometimes done by himself and sometimes done by others. The *Boîte-en-valise* is but one example with its parenthetical title (*From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy*) [what great freedoms are endowed in that From or by]. Or the numerous versions and replicas of his readymades, sometimes made by the dealer and scholar Arturo Schwarz, acting as an agent of Duchamp. And of course the Tate’s *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* made by none other than Richard Hamilton.

A means to consider reproduction in general, as it has invented its way through history. This work is a scan made from an illustration in *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, published in 1969. It was then turned into a letterpress by Aaron Flint Jamison and Emily Thompson at Yale Union in Portland in 2014. It was printed on a Miehle press on Ivory cotton paper. The edition is not numbered. It was made by Maxwell Graham.