

Edited by Stefan Banz

# Marcel Duchamp and the Forestay Waterfall

Symposium – Concert – Intervention – Exhibitions

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In 1954, when Duchamp was supervising the installation of the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, he also inspected and measured the room that he would later use to present his then nascent work *Étant donnés*: a long, narrow room at the far end of the eastern wing of the museum, where works by Kandinsky and Jawlensky were hung until 1969, when it was cleared for *Étant donnés*.<sup>1</sup> From this moment on, he not only knew where his installation was destined to appear, he also knew the exact spatial dimensions he had to plan for. He thus also knew that the installation that he was building in his atelier would only take up half of the space available to him in the museum. Actually, he was not able to set up the other half—that means the part not behind, but in front of the wooden door of *Étant donnés*—in his atelier to test its effect, because the atelier was far too small to accommodate it. Nevertheless, it can not be denied that Duchamp must have been absolutely clear about the fact that *Étant donnés* would be a two-room installation, consisting of a space that the viewer must cross through in order to be able to look into a peephole, and the space that would then be revealed beyond the peephole. Between these two halves of almost identical dimensions, serving as both their separation and their link, there is a wall with a wooden door, brick framing, and plaster—a wall which looks as if it were always there, but was only built for the installation of *Étant donnés* in 1969.

Surprisingly, there is hardly any mention of the front room in the extensive literature on *Étant donnés*, and up to now there has been no depiction of this space as a space in its own right; the image reproduced here (fig. 1) has been made only for this essay. In short, it is a blind spot in the reflection on Duchamp's final work. This is surprising given the fact that Duchamp planned *Étant donnés* specifically for this space and could therefore consider all aspects, not only of the work's production, but also of its reception; and given, on a more general level, that throughout his entire oeuvre Duchamp constantly reflected anew on how the viewer and the work encounter each other in space, concretely staging this aspect, for instance in 1938 at the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, where he designed the central "grotto" of the exhibition, or in 1942 at the exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism*, where he mounted a network of strings,<sup>2</sup> but also when installing his works in 1954 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, creating a precise spatial viewing apparatus for the *Large Glass*, including an especially made door which opened to the eastern terrace of the Philadelphia Museum. My thesis is the following: that we must understand *Étant donnés* as a two-room installation, that is, that *Étant donnés* does not begin with the wooden door and the view through the peepholes, but already with entering the empty door frame, which separates the big, bright room where the *Large Glass* is exhibited from the significantly smaller and darker room that leads to the wooden door (fig. 2). In this essay, I will be speaking only about this first room in the two-room installation of *Étant donnés*, and I will use it to address certain aspects of the experience of Duchamp's last great work. In doing so, I will focus on two aspects: first I will thematize the particular emptiness of this space, as well as the specific way that it activates the viewer. In a second step, I will be speaking of *Étant donnés* as another of those "period rooms" for which the Philadelphia Museum of Art is so famous, asking what insights might be revealed by viewing this work



**1 Marcel Duchamp, Empty room** in front of the wooden door of *Étant donnés*, Gallery 182. Philadelphia Museum of Art. **2 Marcel Duchamp, Empty door frame** between Galleries 182 and 183, leading to the first room of *Étant donnés*. Philadelphia Museum of Art.



3 & 4 Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, performance, Sonnabend Gallery, New York, January 15–29, 1972.

as another “period room.” Here it will not so much be a matter of the emptiness of the room, but of what the room does contain: the plaster wall with the Spanish wooden door and its framing made of Spanish bricks, as well as the Sisal rug covering the entire floor.

### 1. Empty Space, Action, Situation

I come to the first aspect by which we can view the anteroom to *Étant donnés*, that of emptiness. In his later lecture “Where do we go from here,” given in Philadelphia in 1961, Duchamp complained about the reification and commercialization of art, which had created the need for an ascetic revolution. His own artistic response to this was *Étant donnés*, which radically resisted the object status of the work, in the first place because it is not a movable art object, but instead a place where the viewer must go, and secondly because the experience of *Étant donnés* is less the experience of an art object and more the experience of a situation in which the viewer experiences him or herself as someone who productively takes part in the experience to be had here, which creates a connection between the experience of the work and experience of the self. Due to these qualities, and although Duchamp had been planning the work since the late 1940s, *Étant donnés* can be seen as having a specific currency at the time of its public exhibition in 1969. In 1969 it is a *contemporary artwork* in a quite particular way. But in what sense?

On the one hand, what *Étant donnés* shares with the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s and '70s is the attempt to break through the boundaries of the particular arts and métiers to get to practices that could incorporate all kinds of materials and all artistic processes. On the other hand, it also shares that trait that Lazlo Glozer expressed with the famous formula “exit from the image.”<sup>3</sup> With the formula of an “exit from the image,” Glozer grasped a significant trait of those phenomena that marked the era, such as Installation Art, Performance Art, or Conceptual Art. What all of these phenomena had in common was an iconoclastic shift away from the conventional forms of the image, and this iconoclasm was applied to the image as an object of art as well as to the image as a model of representation. What was being sought on a broader front, and in the most varied forms, was an aesthetics of spatial and temporal actuality, the presence of bodies and materials, as well as the situational involvement of the viewer, precisely in order to resist that reification of art that Duchamp had also complained about in his 1961 lecture. In this quest to get beyond the boundaries of the image and into a situation that includes the viewer, the

first room of *Étant donnés*, with its emptiness, is absolutely essential. I would like to clarify this by taking a slight detour to look at two performances—or performance spaces—that were created a few years after the presentation of *Étant donnés*. As far as I know, they were made totally independent of Duchamp’s work, but share with *Étant donnés* the intention of undermining or overrunning the conventional triad of artist, artwork, and viewer.

The first of these performances is Vito Acconci’s *Seedbed*, which he created in 1972 (fig. 3 & 4). One of Acconci’s goals—in this performance but also more generally—consisted in simultaneously understanding and undermining the position of the artistic field of his time, which he experienced as the playing field of “exaggerated formalist criticism” and which he was skeptical about, much like Duchamp.<sup>4</sup> To this end, his performances thematized three central aspects of the field: the act of artistic production, the act of seeing, and the experiential space of the gallery. For *Seedbed*, Acconci had an inconspicuous ramp built in the New York Sonnabend Gallery, which caused the floor in the entire back half of the room to rise gradually to a height of seventy-five centimeters. Anyone coming in the gallery at first did not see much more than an empty room, in which no distinct object could be identified for viewing. Acconci was lying under the ramp, invisible to the spectators, for a total of nine days during the three-week exhibition.

When the spectators walked onto the ramp, he would begin to communicate with them by means of two loudspeakers set up in the room. He masturbated (or pretended to be doing so) and fantasized while the visitors walked around on the ramp above him. Thus, Acconci was confronting two very different spaces with each other: an empty room in which the viewers walked around, and a space separated from it where he himself was. In contrast to *Étant donnés*, here the two spaces are not behind one another, but on top of one another. Furthermore, in the space inaccessible to the viewer there was no life-sized female figure, but Acconci himself, and the contact between the two rooms was not optical, as was the case with Duchamp’s peepholes, but acoustic. I am thus not interested in any direct analogy between *Seedbed* and *Étant donnés*, but in the structural relationships in the layout and in the processes of experiencing both works. This will be particularly clear when we consider the goals that Acconci was pursuing with *Seedbed*. For in a quite aggressive way, the performance reverses what Acconci described in an interview as the common and equally aggressive behavior of viewers in relation to artworks. They enter the exhibition space and single-mindedly let loose at the artwork; that is, they treat the artwork as if it were a target. In his own words, Acconci says:

“It seems like in any kind of art situation, viewer enters exhibition space, viewer heads towards artwork, so viewer is aiming towards artwork. Viewer is treating artwork as a kind of target, so it seems to me this is a kind of general condition of all art viewing, art experience.”<sup>5</sup>

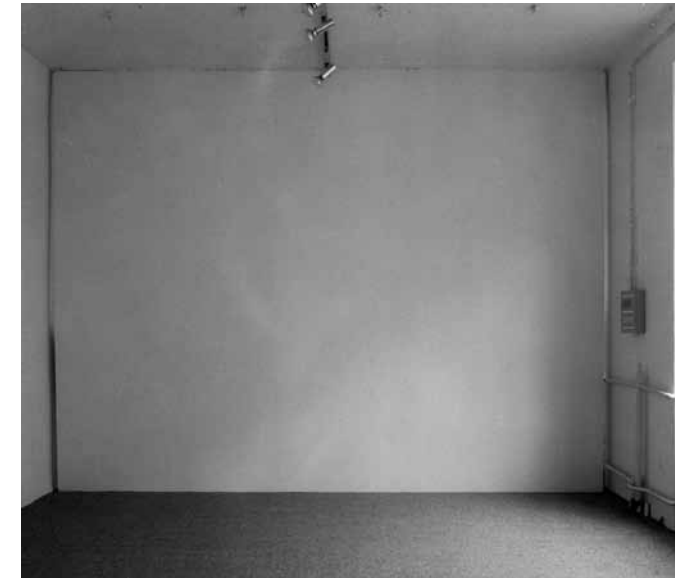
*Seedbed* is an answer to this instrumental way of seeing, since Acconci leaves the viewer looking at emptiness. The work was not an object on the wall or a sculpture in the room, but the situation as a whole—a situation in which the gallery visitor was simultaneously both inside and outside, part of the work and at the same time excluded from it. He or



she could no longer approach the work frontally: the work was everywhere and nowhere. The slanted surface where the gallery visitor walked around becomes a symbol of the destabilized relations between the viewer, the artist, and the work, and at the same time the relations are slipping into the realm of the sexual.

The second performance that I would like to draw on is Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* from 1974 (fig. 5). In the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf, Nauman had an artificial wall built into the room and hung a notice next to it. The text directed the visitors to press their own bodies against this wall as hard as they could. Furthermore the text directed the viewers to imagine that they were themselves pressing back from the other side of the wall, that is, that they were not pressing against the wall, but against themselves. The final sentence in the directions, which revolves around this gradual, imaginary replacement of the wall by the double of one's own body, states that "This may become a very erotic exercise."<sup>6</sup> In the case of Nauman's *Body Pressure*, the artist himself is not present like in Acconci's *Seedbed*, but is instead using the printed notice to direct the visitor to carry out a specific activity. But here as well, the work is no isolated object on the wall or in the room, but a situation. The negation of the conventional work structure on the part of Acconci and Nauman is accompanied by the production of a spatial apparatus in which the visitor becomes activated as the co-producer of the work. One of the things this means is that the positions of subject and object overlap. The visitors are not only the subjects of an aesthetic experience that they are having in relation to the artwork. They simultaneously experience themselves as the objects of the artistic situation, which directs their movements and which forms their perceptions of other and self. While Acconci says that the viewers normally aim at the artwork like a target, in Acconci's *Seedbed* and Nauman's *Body Pressure* the situation is reversed and the artwork becomes something that aims at the viewer.

These dynamics and reversals are also provoked by *Étant donnés*. In this case, the deconstruction of the conventional forms of viewing artworks does not begin with what we see *beyond* the wooden door. It is already happening when we enter the first, front room. Upon entering, we initially see nothing more than a disturbingly empty and underlit room, illuminated only by the light coming in from the open door frame. Some viewers simply turn around and walk out after taking a short look around in this empty room, thinking there's nothing more to see. But even those who notice the door, its brick frames, and the plastered wall and move toward it to examine it more closely do not encounter any artwork in the conventional sense, which would call on us to contemplate it like a picture or sculpture. Until the viewer figures out what is here to see—that is until he discovers the peepholes—he walks around searching for it like on Acconci's ramp, and when he has discovered the peepholes, he has to press up against the wooden door like in Nauman's *Body Pressure* (fig. 6). But neither walking around nor pressing against a door are typical activities when dealing with art. Afterwards—as soon as one has looked through the holes in the wooden door—the experience of the first room of *Étant donnés* is altered once again. For at this moment it becomes clear that when we were walking around in this first room, we have been both in the artwork and outside of it, being already part of it and at the same time not yet knowing it.



5 Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure*, pink poster with text and freestanding wall, 345 x 260 cm, first shown as part of the exhibition *Yellow Room*, Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf, February 4–March 6, 1974. Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, Berlin. Photograph by Dorothee Fischer. 6 Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés*, woman looking through the two peepholes.

I would like to end this comparison between Duchamp, Acconci, and Nauman by mentioning two more structural parallels. The first parallel is that all three works tend to individualize the viewer and produce a one-to-one relationship between the work and the viewer—in Acconci's case through the dialogue with the visitor, in Nauman's through the directions for a bodily encounter with the self, and finally in Duchamp due to the impossibility of two persons looking through the peephole at the same time. All three works thus prevent the art becoming the kind of mass spectacle that Duchamp saw coming and explicitly condemned. The second structural parallel is the following: As soon as one is looking through the peephole and is discovering the interior of *Étant donnés*, one becomes, as the viewer, an exterior element, who can be observed by other visitors. As awkward as it may be to be observed while walking around on Acconci's ramp, being the target of his fantasies, or to be observed pressing against the wall that Nauman had built, trying to have the erotic experience promised by him, it is equally awkward to turn around after looking through *Étant donnés*'s peepholes only to discover that one has been the object of view for other museum visitors.

What binds *Étant donnés* with other contemporary aesthetic projects is thus its concern with an apparatus of viewing,<sup>7</sup> which has striking parallels to the neo-avant-garde critique of the modernist understanding of art that defines art as an object that is perceived by a unbiased viewer, who unlocks its meaning and value with the appropriate knowledge. And it is this modernist and aestheticist understanding of art that has the tendency to turn artworks into fetishes not only of the contemplative gaze of the beholder, but also into fetishes of the art market. Instead Acconci and Nauman, and in a different way also Duchamp, follow another idea, which I called an aesthetic of spatial and temporal actuality, the presence of bodies and materials as well as the situational involvement of the viewer. Not only Acconci and Nauman, but also *Étant donnés* links seeing to the completion of an *action*, understood as a bodily activity carried out over a certain period of time, which in *Étant donnés* includes having to press one's body on a wooden door. At the same time, it links seeing with a *situation*, understood as a place at which this special action takes place.

This expansion of seeing into action and situation opens up the experience of art along a fault line that in a certain sense coincides with the wall set up in the room, which separates *Étant donnés* into two distinct spaces and at the same time links these spaces like a hinge. This hinge separates and links not only the two distinct spaces of *Étant donnés*, it simultaneously separates and links qualities that are commonly understood as oppositional: inside and outside, here and beyond, presentness and timelessness, materiality and immateriality, etc. Duchamp gave this hinge a name: he called it an *infra-thin*.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. A Kind of Period Room

The thematization of the wall that separates and connects the two spaces of *Étant donnés* like a hinge leads me to the second section of this essay. Here we are not concerned with the emptiness of the room, which is filled up as a space of action and situation, but with what is materially contained in this space and what it becomes through this. At the same time I am changing perspective. So far I have attempted to contextualize *Étant donnés* in *time*, not by situating the work in the chronology of Duchamp's work—as the summation



7 Marcel Duchamp, **Photograph** of plastered wall with brick-framed doors in La Bisbal d'Empordà, Spain, early 1960s.

of the oeuvre, as the continuation of the *Large Glass*, or the like—but by working out an aspect of its contemporary aesthetic qualities. Now I would instead like to contextualize it in terms of *space* by discussing *Étant donnés* in its aesthetic relation to the place for which Duchamp conceived the work: the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Three of the four walls of that first room, which is my sole topic here, are empty; the fourth wall, however, which was constructed especially for the work, is a carefully executed artifact over its entire surface, consisting of a wooden door and a brick frame, for which Duchamp selected the raw materials in Spain and had them transferred to America, as well as the plaster surface covering the remainder of the wall. The design of this wall, which in its current form decidedly bears the stamp of Duchamp's stepson, the engineer Paul Matisse, is based on photographs that Duchamp had taken during his summer trips to Spain of similar doors and walls (fig. 7).<sup>9</sup> This combination of using original materials and artificially recreating a space in the context of the museum is precisely the aesthetic logic of the period rooms, which the Philadelphia Museum of Art already possessed in great number and was already famous for by the time Duchamp was working on *Étant donnés* and determined the space for it within the museum. The period rooms seek to merge individual elements that may not necessarily belong together in the way shown—pieces of furniture, elements of decor, artworks, etc.—into a complete aesthetic situation, which makes it possible for the viewer to go on a visual trip to another place and another time.

Interestingly, the fact that Duchamp's installation forms a bridge to the period rooms is one of the arguments that had to be made on January 15, 1969 at a decisive meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia Museum in order



8 & 9 Gallery 256, room from the Stiegerhof near Villach, Austria, late 16th century. Philadelphia Museum of Art (in the museum since 1929). 10 Gallery 262, Dutch paintings and English furniture of the 17th century. Philadelphia Museum of Art (in the museum since 1951). 11 Gallery 263, paneling from a room in the Red Lodge, Langley Park estate, Kent, 1529. Philadelphia Museum of Art (in the museum since 1929).

to accept the endowment of Duchamp's posthumous work. As the third speaker, after the president and then the director of the museum, Henry Clifford, one of the Trustees and earlier a curator of painting, stressed that "in a Museum so rich in period rooms [*Étant donnés*] would add one of this century."<sup>10</sup> Clifford's remark is absolutely pertinent; but I suspect that the aesthetic point of Clifford's statement, that *Étant donnés* would be another "period room" in the museum, has not yet been sufficiently addressed.

Therefore I would like to draw our attention to another element of that first room of *Étant donnés*: to the Sisal carpet that fills the entire room, from the threshold at the entrance to this first room, up to the wooden door where one finally stands and looks. When I stood in this room for the first time, I found this Sisal carpet considerably disturbing. Why was it there? In the meantime I have been able to find out from Michael Taylor's extensive and precise catalogue, published in conjunction with the 2009 exhibition on *Étant donnés*, that it was the last element to be installed, shortly before the work was presented to the public. It cannot be traced back to any decision of Duchamp's, but was rather installed to hide the electronic sensors that had been built into the flooring, which caused the lights to go on behind the wooden door as soon as someone entered the first room of *Étant donnés*. In the meantime, however, the Sisal carpet has actually become unnecessary, as I was also able to find out from Taylor's catalogue. For in August 1998, the floor sensors were replaced with motion sensors installed in the ceiling of the room. Nonetheless, the carpet is still there and even gets replaced when it is too worn out.<sup>11</sup> We must therefore now ascribe to this carpet no longer merely a pragmatic function, but an aesthetic one. This aesthetic function, however, is significant. For in fact we also encounter this Sisal carpet at decisive spots in the museum's period rooms. There, they do not only have the pragmatic function of protecting the valuable flooring, but also a further aesthetic function. They mark that indeterminate space, both spatially and temporally, that you find yourself in when you stand in the viewing station from which you look into these period rooms which you can not enter. In figure 8 we see Gallery 256, the reconstruction of a room of the so-called Stiegerhof near Villach in Austria, built in the late sixteenth century. On the left is the viewing station with the Sisal carpet, from where one has the view shown in figure 9. Actually you stand on a section of the floor in the room that you are looking at, but at the same time you are elsewhere, as if there were an invisible wall separating you from what you are seeing. The situation becomes even more peculiar when two rooms that are temporally and spatially different are directly adjoined. In Gallery 262 with Dutch paintings from the seventeenth century, you can enter a viewing station from which you are looking into the adjacent room, originally part of a hunting lodge in Kent, England, made one century earlier, in 1529 (figs. 10 & 11). When you stand at this viewing station, you are still part of the first room's time-space, but are already looking into the second room's time-space, literally standing in a spatial-temporal nowhere.

A further element of the period rooms corresponds with this non-place of the viewing stations: the light falling through the windows that lights up the rooms, along with spotlights mounted in the rooms themselves that serve to draw attention to details in the furnishings. The light falling through the windows is not natural light, but artificial light simulating natural light. It falls completely evenly, free of the fluctuations that would be caused by



the time of day or weather conditions, shining in through panes that are usually made of frosted glass. The period rooms are thus transformed into a constant present, which gives them a peculiar, somewhat surreal atmosphere. In Gallery 268, a salon from a Parisian town house, there is yet another dimension to this (fig. 12). A balcony railing is visible through the high windows. But of course we cannot walk out onto this balcony, nor even open the window, not only for reasons of conservation, but because we would not be able to look out onto the Rue Royale in Paris, where this palace was constructed shortly before the French Revolution, but onto an interior wall of the museum, complete with the neon lights that are the source of the light coming through the frosted glass. The balcony railing appears on this glass like fantasmatic shadows. In Duchamp's context, one is tempted to speak of this balcony railing as the three-dimensional shadows of that ungraspable four-dimensional spatial time in which this period room lives, somewhere between Paris and Philadelphia, between the French Revolution and the present. In the so-called Late Gothic Room, a late-fifteenth-century French interior, the viewing station and the windows are directly opposite one another (figs. 13 & 14). For anyone standing here after having seen Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, the impression is overwhelming. The view from the station into these windows is structurally the same as the view through Duchamp's door, only that here the door is missing, which makes this view over time and spaces all the more inscrutable. In short, the link between the position that one takes standing at the station with its Sisal-carpeted floor and the spaces that one looks at from there, is *infra-thin*. In precisely the way that I have just described them for the period rooms, the viewer in *Étant donnés* stands on the Sisal carpet and looks through the peepholes (fig. 6), at that female figure and that landscape that are bathed in an even, timeless light by an elaborate arrangement of spotlights and neon, which is installed above the strange diorama (fig. 15), hidden from the spectator and visible here only by way of the photographs Duchamp made for his manual of instructions for the dismantling and reassembly of *Étant donnés*.

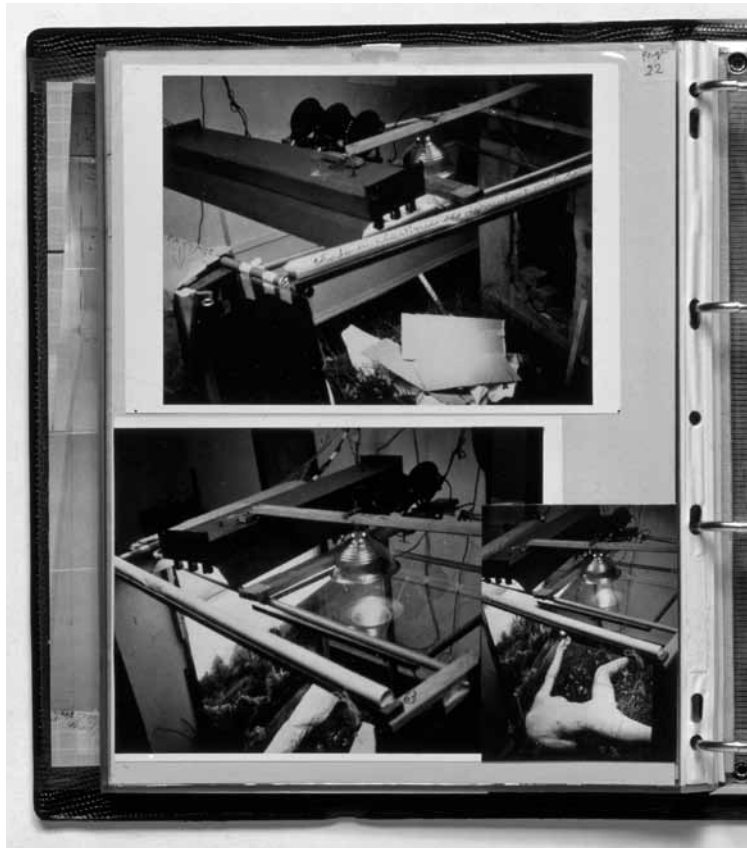
In his lecture on the "Creative Act," Duchamp speaks of the fact that it is not only the artist that makes the work, but that the spectators, who come into the world later, contribute equally to it. The first room of *Étant donnés*, which was constructed in Philadelphia without having previously been dismantled in Duchamp's atelier in New York, is a space in which this programmatic statement becomes constructed reality. For it is as much conceived by Duchamp as it is added to by posterity, at least in its current form. It is marked by an irrevocable *différance* between Duchamp's intentions and the actual reality. In his lecture on the creative act, Duchamp claims that this difference is precisely the art-coefficient held in the work. It has been my wish to show that the art-coefficient of *Étant donnés* is closely connected with the hinge function of the wall that simultaneously separates and links the two very different spaces of *Étant donnés*. I wanted to show that this hinge function of the wall only becomes apparent if we take *Étant donnés* not as beginning with and beyond the wooden door, but conceive of it as a two-room installation, where the door with its peephole is not the delimitation of the installation, but is located in the *middle* of it. To end this essay by coming back to its title—*Étant donnés* as a Form of Experience—my argument sums up to this: *Étant donnés* is an apparatus which produces for the beholder a very special experience: the experience of the *infra-thin*.

Translated from the German by Daniel Hendrickson



**12 Gallery 268**, Salon from Hôtel Le Tellier, 13, rue Royale, 1782–85, with modifications in 1789. Philadelphia Museum of Art (in the museum since 1928). **13 & 14 Gallery 214**, Late Gothic Room, composed of elements from several late-fifteenth-century Northern European, mostly French interiors. Philadelphia Museum of Art (in the museum since 1928). View of the entrance door and the viewing station (13) and view of the windows (14).





15 Marcel Duchamp, One page of *Manual of Instructions* for the assembly of *Étant donnés*: 1° La chute d'eau, 2° Le gaz d'éclairage, 1966. Philadelphia Museum of Art 1987 (English version 2009), unpaginated.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Michael R. Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, exh. cat. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia and New Haven 2009, p. 89, giving the details and reproducing the relevant documents.

<sup>2</sup> For the details of these two environments, see Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp: Revised and Expanded Paperback Edition*, New York 2000, nos. 461 and 488.

<sup>3</sup> Lazlo Glozer, *Westkunst*, exh. cat. Museen der Stadt Köln, Cologne 1981, pp. 234ff. In the original text, written in German, the formula reads "Ausstieg aus dem Bild."

<sup>4</sup> "I was feverish to know the rules of the field—you know, the rules of the game. And it's funny because a lot of the stuff that meant a lot to me at that time was real exaggerated formalist criticism—Michael Fried, whatever. Not so much that I agreed with it, but it made a certain position clear—what I wanted to resist." Vito Acconci (in a retrospective statement from 1984), quoted in Christine Poggi, "Following Acconci/Targeting Vision," in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, London and New York 1999, pp. 255–72, here p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> Vito Acconci, interviewed by Robin White at Crown Point Press (1979), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Kraynak, ed., *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 83–85. My usage of Nauman's work in this context is inspired by Amelia Jones, "Kunsthandeln. Bruce Naumans *Body Pressure* und das Scharnier," in *Kunsthandeln*, ed. Karin Gludovatz et al. Zurich and Berlin 2010, pp. 16–36. Jones already notes and convincingly discusses the connection between Nauman's and Duchamp's aesthetics of the hinge.

<sup>7</sup> See Dalia Judovitz's nuanced analysis of *Étant donnés* as an "apparatus of spectatorship" (Dalia Judovitz, "The Apparatus of Spectatorship: Duchamp, Matta-Clark, and Wilson," in *Drawing on Art: Duchamp and Company*, Minneapolis 2010, ch. 5, pp. 181–218). Judovitz argues, and I am in complete agreement with her, that *Étant donnés* is a reflection on the mechanisms of sight at play in the act of reception. While Judovitz is concentrating on *Étant donnés* as a peephole setup staging the spectator's "look" and at the same time disassembling it, I'm changing perspective by bringing the hinge-like wall and the empty front room of *Étant donnés* into focus. Judovitz discusses what my analysis is deliberately leaving out: what happens in that precise moment when the spectator is looking through the peepholes. In fact her and my arguments are like communicating vessels.

<sup>8</sup> For some examples by which Duchamp explains the principle of *infra-thin* (in French: *infra-mince*), see *Marcel Duchamp, Notes*, Paris 1999, pp. 21–24: "Le possible est un infra mince ... Le possible impliquant le devenir—le passage de l'un à l'autre"; les "porteurs d'ombre représenté par toutes les courbes de lumière (soleil, lune, étoiles, bougies, feu) ... travaillent dans l'inframine"; "La chaleur d'un siege (qui vient d'être quitté) est infra-mince"; "Peinture sur verre vue du côté non peint donne un infra mince"; "La différence (dimensionnelle) entre 2 objets faits en série [sortis du même moule] est un inframine quand le maximum (?) de précision est obtenu." For Duchamp's notion of the *infra-thin*, see the contributions of Antje von Graevenitz and Molly Nesbit in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp* (note 1), pp. 163–65.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167–68.