

The Urinal from Behind

In 1987, the 100th anniversary of Marcel Duchamp's birth, an exhibition titled *Marcel Duchamp Fountain*, based on the theme of the artist's urinal, was held in the U.S. I received a copy of the exhibition catalogue from a friend of mine. I liked the book's stylish design, consisting of a green cover with Alfred Stieglitz's famous photograph of the urinal and the title "Fountain," but the back cover took me by surprise. It centered on a picture showing the urinal from behind. I wondered if Duchamp was really aware of how attractive the urinal looked from this angle, which we normally never have a chance to see.

In the fall of 1917, around the time that the urinal was rejected by the exhibition committee, Duchamp made a portrait of himself reflected in an infinity mirror at a Broadway photo shop. The picture shows Duchamp's face from various angles, but all of the reflections of his face are actually an illusion. The only real image is a shot of Duchamp from behind. "Mirror" is an important keyword in deciphering the mystery of Duchamp. What happens when you add urinals to the equation?

In 1964, toward the end of Duchamp's life, he made a print based on a drawing of Stieglitz's photograph of the urinal. This work, titled *Mirrorical Return*, includes a short text, which contains the word "mirror." Some of the letters are also colored red to spell out "urinal" and "urine." There seems to be a link between Duchamp, mirrors, and urinals.

Duchamp's urinal is generally seen as a scandalous incident. My own interest was the same until I saw the urinal from behind. I would like to consider the beauty of the form – something shared by all of the readymades Duchamp selected – and the significance of the male urinal as a four-dimensional shadow.

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