Uršula Berlot

Duchamp in mimesis

Slika na naslovnici:
Air de Paris / Pariški zrak, 1919

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Ko tobačni dim diši tudi po ustih, ki ga izdihavajo,
se oba vonja združita infratanko.

Duchamp, *Notes*, 1980

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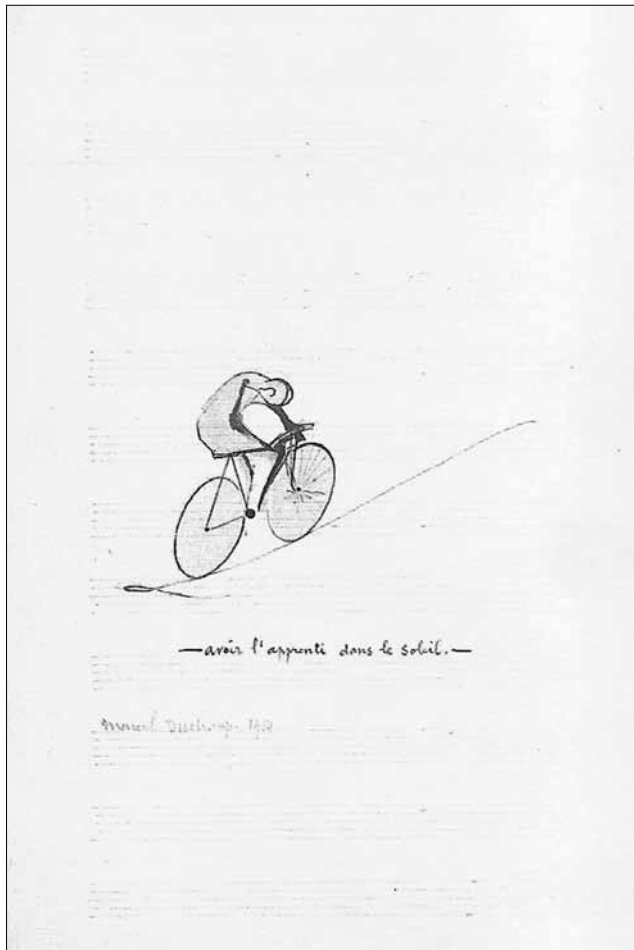01 *Marcel Duchamp.* Fotografija Marcela Duchampa pred visečim ogledalom, 10. oktober 1917, New York.

02   Risba kolesarja s pripisom *Avoir l'apprenti dans le soleil*, 1914; fotografija risbe je element *Škatle iz leta 1914*.

Mimesis:
Difference and Resemblance

Interpretations of modern art, particularly its conceptual and abstract forms, are mostly based on foundations of modern representation, which does not refer to external things but is self-referential. The significant feature of modern art is defined by denying any references to concrete objects, models or motifs external to artistic representation. Instead, the power of art lies in its unique means of expression. In view of the fact that mimesis has been traditionally understood as the practice of arranging connections between things and images, that is to say between the reality (model) and its artistic representation (painting or sculptural representation), the hypothesis defining modern art as being essentially anti-mimetic seems to be self--evident.

Defenders of anti-mimetic revolution of modern art which cut off ties with the art referring to the world of objects or nature, commonly described as physical (perceptible) reality, routinely quote some of the founders of modern art (Malevich, Mondrian, Kandinsky), including the name of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). Modern abstract art of the 20th century emphasized its independence from the objective world and nature due to the creation of its own and unique »object«. This art originates in itself, creates its own medium and its own Idea. A distinguished quality of modern image which denies the importance of the object materiality on behalf of conceptual dimension of an artwork (the Idea) manifests itself in Malevich's abstract and objectless painting *White on White*, Mondrian's geometric

compositions, or in Duchamp's inscriptions of ready-mades. From this perspective, Duchamp's art can be seen as a negation of an »art object« and traditional art techniques, as well as an ironic parody of art referring to the object world using mimetic principles of similarity. It seems as though Duchamp pursues the aim of modern art to its radical consequences by creating images dissimilar to anything in the world and thus embodying the role of anarchic anti-art artist.

Detailed analysis of the notion of mimesis as well as the structural or conceptual methodological procedures of some of the fundamental modern art works reveals mimesis as a theory to be essentially concerned with conceptual proceedings and definitions of resemblances and differences in the symbolic structure of an artwork. Looking from this perspective Duchamp's art can't be understood as a simple negation of similarity, but contrary, as an artistic position which concerns the question of similar and different (that is a core concept of mimetic theory), as an important subject of his artistic research. In this context it is important, however, to understand mimesis not only as an act of imitation, which confines the term to a relatively clear definition of artistic representation of reality, but to see it from a broader perspective.

Mimetic acts of repetition, reproduction and projection create networks of correspondences, similarities and differences in traditional relationships between the model (original) and its art imitation (copy) as well as networks of minimal differences in modern systems of serially produced and simulated images leaving the question of the existence of the original entirely irrelevant. Namely, even in non-representational art, mimesis functions within dialectics of resemblance and difference defining complex relationships between model and image, original and copy and it defines also a series of differences established by symbolic acts of repetition and simulation in abstract art, performance or conceptual art.

Jacques Rancière (2003) argues that the system of representation is not a system of resemblance, to which modern art opposes its non-figurative or non-representative art forms. Moreover, it is an operation of alteration of resemblance, defining the rela-

tions between visible and spoken or non-visible. »The anti-mimetic revolution never signified renunciation of resemblance. Mimesis was the principle not of resemblance, but of a certain codification and distribution of resemblances« (Rancière 2003: 118). The essence of modern art break was not the development of abstract ways of expression instead of traditional painting motifs, but mostly a search for new procedures and ways of transmissions between the linguistic (the notional) and the visible, that is to say between visual and non-visual representations.

Mimesis has had different connotations throughout history, ranging from imitation, reproduction to fiction, simulation, or illusion, which comprise basic theoretical concepts of the term mimesis. All these notions provide a different, sometimes even paradoxical definition of resemblance and difference, identity or differential repetition and they range from articulations of different aspects of similarities, analogies and correspondence (Greek mimesis, classical theory of imitation and illusion) to interest in resemblance and difference in modern interpretations of simulation and hyper-reality. Mimesis as an act of duplication, differentiation or separation contains an inner paradox, which is expressed as a search for differences in things that resemble or resemblances in things that are different. This mimetic duality and ambiguity is a peculiar feature that is common to all various meanings of the term mimesis.

Modern systems of representation focus on differences even while being concerned with resemblances. The differentiation at the symbolic level of the image and its conceptual dissimilar similarity form the essential experience of modern mimesis, redirecting art from traditional forms of imitation and search for identity to definitions of differential interval. Therefore the main feature of modern and postmodern mimesis is the experience of difference, repetition and simulation and not an interest in relations of resemblances between the artistic presentation and its model. Modern art is not a simple anti-mimetic destruction of the image and its resemblance, but above all the construction of an image through negation and conceptual differentiation.

Duchamp argues that »the separation is an operation« by which he sets the gap between the reference or function of an

object on one hand, and parameters of an image such as name or signature on the other hand of his conceptual art. Duchamp's symbolic act of differentiation magically transforms a serial object into a unique ready-made work of art, as well as it precipitates imaginary dimensional space divisions in *The Large Glass*. The concept of difference in reproduction and duplication or the concept of dissimilar similarity engaged by projection and techniques of imprint are key procedural elements in Duchamp's art.

Duchamp's artistic practice is not a simple negation but above all a critical reinterpretation of classical mimesis: his art deals with the question of reproduction, the problem of repetition, similarity and difference, and it focuses on procedures of projection and their modifications: analogies, anamorphoses and metaphors. Duchamp in a specific way reinterprets fundamental mimetic techniques such as reproduction, projection and imprint, but he uses them to negate the traditional concept of resemblance, or to be precise, the classical concept of image. In this sense, Duchamp does not carry out an anarchistic negation of an art »object« in favor of an abstract engagement with concepts and notions, but rather questions traditional approaches to defining and evaluating art. In Duchamp's art, the problem of mimesis is reflected in an entirely new perspective by his conceptual and ironic treatments of resemblance and difference. Duchamp's conceptualizations of minimal, infrathin difference in repetition and reproduction of an object or his engagements with the problem of dissimilar similarity in projection and its modalities, such as analogies, anamorphoses and metaphors, reveals that forms of mimetic impulse can be discovered also in conceptual or abstract art.

Duchamp was able to redefine the structure of mimesis by using forms of projection, reproduction techniques and imprint without falling back into the old traditional mimetic forms of imitation precisely by conceiving the hypothesis of infrathin which transforms the operation of reproduction into a differential operation - operation of the separation.[7] According to

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7   Notes on infrathin are published in Duchamp, Marcel. 1980/1999. *Notes*. Paris: Flammarion, under chapter *Inframince*. There are 46 notes

Didi-Huberman the term »infrathin« applies to Duchamp's entire theoretical work which enabled him to »make a full use of reproduction techniques while constantly expressing his fear of repetition« (Didi-Huberman 2008: 279) because each repetition contains time difference and infrathin conceptual interval.

The logic of differential thinking which defined the cultural parameters of the previous century is expressed in Duchamp's art in the form of conception of minimal difference between the same, and in terms of dissimilation, anamorphose and dimensional projection. Duchamp's image is essentially dissimilar since it derives from alternations of the similarity, which through procedures of repetition and reproduction focuses on tiny difference and articulation of barely perceptible or intelligible »shade« of difference in the similar. According to Didi-Huberman Duchamp »broke up with the classical imitation techniques without disavowing similarity« (Didi-Huberman 2008: 275) since he uses mimetic procedures as ways of redefining resemblance and difference and thus reinterpreting traditional theoretical concepts of mimesis. Resemblance is just one among the key concepts of the theory of mimesis, which more widely encompasses the question of the model and copy, the function of repetition, simulation and duplication, relationship between real and virtual and the status of referential in art.

Duchamp's idea of an infrathin differential is based on the logic of difference in repetition; difference which is invisibly separating the identity of serially produced objects and can be attained only by mind: »The dimensional difference between two mass produced objects (from the same mold) is infrathin when the maximum precision is obtained« (Duchamp 1999: 24, *Inframince*, n. 18). Two forms cast in the same mold differ from each other by an infrathin amount; noticing the difference in_identical means »losing the ability to recognize two simi-

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altogether, most of them were written in the thirtieth and fortieth. Duchamp writes *infrathin* [*l'inframince*] without dash or infrathin [*l'inframince*] without span [*l'infra mince*] as well as with dash as infathin [*l'infra-mince*]. He once claimed that »infrathin denotes adjective, not the name – and never a noun« (Duchamp 1999: 21, *Inframince* n. 5) but he himself often used it as a noun as well.

lar objects (…) Reaching the insufficiency of visual memory to transfer impression from one resemblance to another« (Duchamp 1994: 47). Duchamp points out that we can talk about the biggest difference only when our observation of difference entails observation of similarity, dissimilar similarity. According to Duchamp noticing difference in identical or similarities in different is an outcome of mental observation. Seeing is not visual perception but mental (conceptual, intellectual) and spiritual observation which is able to recognize, compare and create similarities or differences.

In this sense Duchamp's idea of infrathin is comparable to the notion of conceptual resemblance defined by Foucault and Magritte (Foucault 2007) in their famous writings on resemblance. Magritte insists that resemblance is not defining the relationship between two objects but is an act of our minds established by our mental and spiritual activity: a work of art is a materialized thought, its resemblance is not identification but symbolization. The resemblance of an image is a projection of spirit and not a feature of objects themselves; it is only by our minds (spirits) that we see resemblances or differences. Therefore art is not reproduction but creation of images-thoughts, images that resemble (visualize) thoughts; creation of the image is an act of thinking necessary for producing the visual. Taking into consideration the concept of resemblance is essential for understanding Duchamp's nominalism in creating the ready--made and in understanding infrathin difference between two mass produced objects, one of which can obtain the status of a ready-made by intervention of a conceptual image-thought, while the other remains an undifferentiated element of series without intellectual intervention of the »image«.[8]

8   When Magritte thinks about resemblance he insists on a certain deficiency and the necessary distinction between image and represented object, which has already been discussed in the classical theory of imitation. Jean-Claude Lebenzstejn through the analysis of Quatremère de Quincy's classicist theory of image (1755-1849) stressed that imitation at its best is not oriented towards a production of similarities between the model and the copy, but towards an Ideal, which reveals a deficiency in the model. The main feature of the image is a difference (a span) between the model and the image itself

Duchamp's differential reasoning about difference in repetition is best understood by reading Gilles Deleuze's work *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze suggests that the key factor for understanding difference is repetition, and not similarity as usually perceived. »Difference implies repetition« (Deleuze 1968: 103) because repetition is never repetition of the same but opens up a span and repeats the difference. Difference is not only a differential between different entities, but also a span in a set of »sameness« while connecting recurring elements. Repetition and difference are intertwining concepts, each repetition implies a difference and so even mechanically reproduced repetitions are pre-determined by differences, varieties and modifications. A repetition is not a reproduction of something identical but in particular implementation of a difference: »The task of imagination or spirit is precisely bringing out something new in a repetition, bringing out a difference« (ibid. 103). The constitution of difference is a work of observing spirit and thus discloses its imaginary nature; we can say the same of repetition since »repetition itself does not produce any change in the object, at the material state. On the contrary, a change occurs in the observer as a difference, as something new in the state of the mind« (ibid.: 96).

At the same time Deleuze highlights the hidden play of differences as the essence of representation. Repetition is explained neither as a form of identity nor as a form of representation because all identical are simulations, created by the optical effect of interplay between difference and repetition: repetition creates the order of eternal recurrence, endless repetition and circular movements contrary to the linear concept of time. Repetitions originating from previous repetitions, set in place through differences, create movements of circular simulations

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– artistic imitation differs from natural (mechanical and organic) repetition processes by a construction of a mental image, which is the first condition of imitation since it replaces the deficiency of the model with an Ideal. Art is established by conception of a span, namely by production of resemblance with the original object, but presented in another object, which now becomes its resembling reflection (Lebensztejn 1996).

and recurrences of endless series of simulacra. Cycles express sets of simulacra without the original, without a beginning or an end, as a movement of endless differentials in space, as endless recurrence of phantasms. Deleuze denies any possibility of identity that would imply the world of representation: »The modern world is a world of simulacra« (ibid.: 1) and the modern thought was founded on the ruins of representation and its concepts of identity, homogeneity and imitation.

The theory of simulation, appearance and hyper-reality does not provide us with the concept of difference based on discerning between model and copy (Plato), but on a serial repetition of the identical and differential oppositions of the elements in simulated images without its original (Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida). The theory of simulacra originates in Plato's philosophy which discerns between two types of images, »good« icons that look like the model (Idea) and »bad« simulacra that appear to be like the model while being in fact different. Difference and simulacra once degraded in Plato's philosophy are given a full recognition in the postmodern theories of simulation and hyper-realities. Difference between the simulation and the model is central for understanding of our postmodern period: »The simulation tries to simulate (reproduce) external results by using different generative mechanism while the model tries to include the internal structure of phenomena, its inner mechanism without any correspondence with result« (Žižek 2005: 126).

An image established by differential mimesis is a constitution of a difference aimed at de-realization of the model, ideal and truth (simulation) or is expressed as tendency to illustrate minimal difference. Badiou describes »the passion for difference« of modern art, which tries »to invent the content of a minimal difference, giving form to »something« where there is almost nothing« (Badiou 2005: 77), and by this he defines the real as an elusive and ambiguous entity, a kind of »perceptual nuance« of imaginable or visible.[9]

9   Alain Badiou deploys two modes of what he calls the »passion for the real«: a passion for true identity by discarding the deceiving layers of false reality is essentially destructive; contrary to this we have a passion for differences which aims at isolating a minimum value difference,

Resemblance and difference exist only in the symbolic realm and mimesis establishing a wider playground for their interplay does not refer to reality, but circulates within the system of representation. Mimesis is essentially a symbolic operation of repetition or separation, being expressed in a conceptual or abstract minimal art by engaging the concept of minimal difference. Minimal difference in repetition is the main element of mimesis expressed in abstract, minimal or conceptual art. According to Perret (2001) mimesis of modern art is articulated in forms of repetition and methods of serial reproduction (abstraction, conceptual art), by searching minimum value differences within identical (minimalism) and through forms of repetition in performing arts. In reference to Aristotle's theory of mimesis Perret stresses that mimesis represents the logic of actions and symbolization created by montage of translation and interpretation of one act with another. Mimesis of modern art however, emphasized the importance of practical action in erasing borders between art and reality, as well as it exposed the visibility of mimetic procedures contrary to the idea of transparent use of artistic means (medium) or by its reduction to the system of effects.

Mimesis in Duchamp's art is not modality of reference, copy or expression. His representation functions not as reproduction, but as production of the visible. The concept of mimesis in Duchamp's art is redefined by three parameters: first, mimesis has nothing to do with reference; second, it is an operation based on difference, separation and duality, which introduces the intermediate sphere of medium (inter-space); third, mimesis is not a reproduction of one thing with another, but a figuration of one act (logic) through another; it is a binary act of intertwining at least two acts or complex joint series of acts that are connected and interpret each other« (Perret 2001: 272-278). Duchamp's

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instead of destroying the reality. Badiou's philosophy generally aims at the notion of truth and by that differs from philosophy of difference as well as from postmodern theories of simulation. In the context of this analysis I refer to Badiou's concept of minimal difference to point out its affinity with the concept of infrathin, Duchamp's original articulation of minimal difference.

notes related to *The Large Glass*, ready-mades and many other artworks disclose the motives of his art as an assembly of procedures exposing the meaning of »working« instead of intentional project to »work on something«, i.e. the meaning of creativity which is not production of a certain object, but mobilization of thoughts and acts in certain context.

Duchamp invents new forms of repetition and reproduction in ready-mades, sculptures, graphics, reliefs and assemblages. This is not to say that he denies traditional art techniques, painting or sculpture; instead he changes contexts, system values and art procedures, which limit their use and creative potentials. Duchamp explores different conditions for expanding human perception and new means of artistic reproduction in order to limit manipulation with appearances and focus on non-visual, intellectual and sensual experiences of artworks.

In this sense Duchamp's art is based on an experience of modern mimesis which does not have an origin (original) we could reproduce or repeat. For this reason he takes traditional notions of originality (originality of the artwork, author and his statement) as ironic acts. Mimesis is not an operation focused on original and basis (model, original) in order to transform it into another form, artistic medium or reality (image, copy). Duchamp's mimesis combines resemblance and difference, external and internal, surface and depth into one and the same movement, as the front and the reverse side of the same coin, as endless movement of a Mobius stripe. Duchamp suggests that the meaning of an artwork is defined by the viewer and thus depends on the plurality of views that we take. Duchamp's artworks make us four-dimensional observers who do not perceive oppositions, such as external-internal, different-similar, empty and full.[10]

Contemporary aesthetic theories of mimesis emphasize some of the aspects of artistic representation which have been neglected by Plato and Aristotle. Anthropologically oriented theorists of mimesis have perceived a connection between mimesis and magic or magical rituals in archaic cultures; the concepts of »nonsensous similarity« (Benjamin) or »sympathetic magic«

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10   »External and internal may have the same identification code in the fourth dimension« (Duchamp 1994: 45).

(Taussig) re-evaluate mimetic capability as form of making »magical« correspondences and analogies.

Today's connection of mimesis to nature is less obvious compared to the past and yet many modern and contemporary theories of mimesis relate to the idea of nature in different ways.[11] Benjamin's theory of mimesis is based on analogy between similarity produced by nature itself (known as mimicry) and »nonsensous similarity« produced only by humans (Benjamin 1986). Benjamin compares different forms of mimesis, existing in the modern technological world with archaic forms of mimetic behavior and concludes that mimetic cognitive processes have not simply disappeared but were transformed into new forms of nonsensous similarity, for instance in language. Archaic cultures connected mimesis to magical rituals based on belief in invisible connections and effects among natural, material and immaterial phenomena. Benjamin's concept of nonsensous similarity thus discloses connection to the magical comprehension of the world, which is not based on visual and perceptual similarities but invisible correspondences, connections and analogies between visible and invisible phenomena.

For Benjamin a »nonsensous similarity« is directed towards the immaterial sphere and is based upon the idea of invisible connections among phenomena; this attitude is similar to, and expanded by, Taussig's concept of »sympathetic magic« (Taussig 1993), which connects mimesis to magical rituals based on magical similarity between cause and effect, original and its copy. The peculiarity of mimetic imitation is based on magical belief

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11   Traditionally the notion of mimesis was closely connected to the idea of imitation or reproduction of nature: art was imitating natural forms, phenomena and processes (mimesis as reproduction) or in relation to genesis, art was imitating the natural force of creation and production (mimesis as production). Aristotle's notion of mimesis among others, was not denoting only an aesthetic category describing the form of artistic representation of reality, but was encompassing a wider scope of mimetic behavior in the sphere of individual, social or cultural human relations (imitation of behavior codes, rituals, knowledge and values). It is notable that contemporary social, feminist or anthropological theories explain mimesis in relation to social phenomena and not as a theoretical concept in the field of aesthetics.

that things, once they have been in contact with each other, can influence one another regardless of the distance between them. Mimetic representation imitates features of the original by spreading its power of agency – this is the reason why magical copies can influence the original and reality, thus triggering networks of reciprocal sympathies and correspondences. Mimesis and mimetic imitations, the production of models of similarity and difference enable culture and art to create a »second nature« acting creatively like the nature itself.

Taussig's theory offers two important premises: magical power of images and the phenomenon of »optical tactility« exposing a specific haptic feature of the vision which can now act as a means of touch. This highlights not only visual, but also bodily (visceral) origin of the imaging. Mimesis based on non-visual, bodily observation connects the visual image to visceral perception and thus dissolves the border between the subject and its surroundings. The idea of resemblance, based on »optical tactility« and meaning of bodily (visceral) perception of the image as presented in Taussig's theory of sympathetic and magical mimesis coincides with Duchamp's concepts of infrathin tactile and visceral resemblance, notably expressed in his late works (after 1945) which were oriented towards the haptic, sensual and sculptural.

Tactile and visceral resemblance as well as resemblance of the opposite are based on »infrathin analogies« (Duchamp 1999: 21, *Inframince*, n. 2) which form invisible connections and correspondence among paradoxical aspects of reality. Duchamp's infrathin analogies form networks of sensorial oscillations (among visual, tactile and audio perceptions), showing transformation of subtle experiences into concepts of that experiences, subtle transitions between sensual-visceral and intellectual-cerebral experiences of the consciousness.[12] Infrathin as a border-

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12 Duchamp 1999: 21-36, *Inframince*; Infrathin analogy (n. 10); infrathin division between noise of a shot (very close) and the apparition of a sign of the bullet on the target (n. 12); infrathin/reflection of light on different surfaces more or less polished (n. 46); the warmth of the seat (which has been just left) is infrathin (n. 4); difference between volumes of air displaced by a clean shirt (ironed and folded) (Duchamp 1994: 272, *Texticules*).

line sign of a sub-sensorial phenomena belongs to the domain of »hypophysics« which is, according to Duchamp, the »science« of the sub-sensorial, visceral and organic. In his art, optic phenomena are easily transformed into tactile phenomena and his descriptions of infrathin subtle, »hypophysical« sensations are directed towards tactile borders of visibility.

The infrathin analogy represents a dissimilar similarity producing space and semantic dissimilation. Similarity understood as dissimilation contains a certain negativity differing from a simple negation since it erases pre-established cognitive mental patterns of perceptual experience, understanding or explanation of the world. Duchamp does not deny but transforms traditional approaches to art and suggests a change of vision, an openness towards the different, contingent and unknown.

Duchamp's interest in describing infrathin sensorial oscillations or invisible, conceptual, and intelligible dimensions of an artwork opens up the domain of imaginary resemblance, engaging mimesis as a space of magical connections, projections and analogies created primarily by the observer. Seen from this perspective mimesis cannot be described as imitation or simulation of reality, but as analogy connecting bodily (visceral) and cerebral experience. B. M. Stafford (1996) observes that art based on disclosure of analogies and invisible connections among seemingly paradoxical or dissimilar elements triggers intuitive and visceral reactions of spectator, who is inspired to visionary investigate and invent new forms of analogical relations and meanings of an art work. Analogy is the art of discovery, which presupposes an imaginary and conceptual ability of creating correlations at different levels of perception, imagination and conceptualization.

Mimesis as analogy restores the resemblance at the physiological level of sub-sensorial phenomena, where the seemingly dissimilar or the opposite coincide. Art operating in the dimension of intelligible, infrathin sensorial qualities, mimetic analogies and magic correlations of an image engages a specific cognitive and perceptual sensibility of the spectator, whose imagination becomes the most creative and vital element structuring the open form of an artwork.

03   Zapiski in reprodukcija iz dela *Zelena škatla/ La Boîte verte,* 1934 ali *Nevesta, ki jo njeni samski
      moški slečejo, celo/La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même.* Škatla iz kartona vsebuje:
      eno barvno reprodukcijo, 93 zapiskov, risbe, fotografije, faksimilije. 33,2 × 28 × 2,5 cm.

Reviews
I.
Prof. Dr. Tomaž Brejc

In modern art theory the problem of creation and representation relates to the Aristotelian conception of the ideal, real and rhetoric imitation in an entirely new way. Since modernism mimesis is no longer a creative process through which an artist represents things seen and understood, but rather it is a conceptual pattern, a grey in--between zone, which distinguishes different levels of »imitation«. A similarity to the natural object and phenomenon or an approximation of an abstract prototype is, in this respect, of minimal importance. The scope of mimesis now comprises all creative acts which establishes models of resemblance, either real or fictitious relations, and within this framework there is a massive production of duplicates, interfaces, simulations and genetic copies of the real and in particular, of the theoretical object. The foundation of imitation is no longer an analogical and technical procedure but a conceptual method enabling projections of »dissimilar similarities«, modified appearance parallelisms to the original model, such as can be seen, for example, in Duchamp's Large Glass.

The author's research focuses on Duchamp's notion of infrathin, on his performing outstandingly profound analyses of his artistic intentions. The infrathin is the tiniest, barely discernible dividing line or connection, a scarcely perceptible »imprint« between the real and conceptual time and space: it is time which denotes a moment before the onset of a moment, it is an infinitesimal distance, a shift, which allows us to recognize it; it is a trace, which forms space so as to make it disappear without leaving it. Rather it continues in n-dimensional space; it is a cerebral activity which transforms the conceptual model into a raw product (ready-made) or into a pure mental theoretical object (Duchamp's puns, plays on words, aphorisms). But it is precisely in Duchamp's infrathin model of hypostatic (not abstract!) »imitation« that the sensorial contents and materials are retained in the realm of thought as well, seemingly contradictory though quite justifiable. For him this is not a clean, sterile entity. None of Duchamp's intellectual games are without their sensuality, their sexual nature. The infrathin dimension is the grey matter or zone which within Duchamp's model of imitation effortlessly kneads sensual and cognitive data, retaining, analyzing and projecting them on the outside. Only in this conceptual inter-zone do the real objects

behave as ideas (ready-mades) and the artist's »cerebral activities« can be shaped into recognizable theoretical objects.

Uršula Berlot has written a fascinating and highly engaging analysis of these activities, firmly grounded in contemporary art theory and philosophy, introducing Duchamp as a radical thinker, and as someone who had a profound impact on posterior forms of minimal and conceptual art. She has shown that the infrathin mimetic interface is a reversible strategy, within which discursive, scientific, conceptual and artistic thought are equally operational, and that the close links manifested today between theory and the esthetic effect are largely due to Duchamp.

II.
Prof. Dr. Mladen Dolar

Uršula Berlot's *Duchamp and Mimesis* is, in all respects, an outstanding work, which single-handedly ties the traditional problem of mimesis to the foundational issues of modernism, which happens to be modernism precisely by virtue of its breaking away from mimesis – or so it would seem. The notion of mimesis has a long history in philosophy and art theory as one of the key theoretical concepts used to shed light on artistic activity. It indicated the essential question of the relationship between art and reality and was therefore related to notions like the imitation of reality, copying, reproduction and simulation; in brief, artistic ways of representing reality in art. However, with the birth of modern art, which abandoned the norm of imitation and representation, this notion seemed to have lost much of its importance. And this is where the author sets off to formulate her primary thesis: with the demise of mimetic art and the onset of abstraction, non-figural art, conceptual art etc., this notion took on both new meaning and a different scope; it needed to be expanded to include the concepts of codifications, differences and repetitions, which subtly define non-representational art and form its very tissue. If mimesis is thus defined through a net of »differences and repetitions«, if it is transformed into a »differential mimesis«, then a thought is directed to a separation, a minimal difference and a doubling of the artistic work itself. And this is precisely what the famous notion of infrathin aims at, the notion which Duchamp identified as the central role in his work and which can serve as a connecting thread in new analyses.

The infrathin refers to the inner division of identity, which distinguishes an object from its very self, thus conditioning the notorious Duchampian move, which transforms a serially produced artifact into an original ready-made work of art. This concept also enables Duchamp to break away from the traditional mimetic procedures of reproduction to create, by way of a symbolic move, a differential operation of separation. The notion of infrathin allows Duchamp to conceive a number of other operations which are, here in this account of his work, painstakingly analyzed by the author, in terms of transparency of multidimensional spatial realities, issues concerning the affinities of opposites and paradoxical similarities, transfer of levels of various sensorial qualities, sensing of »hypophysical« similarity and more. The author convincingly demonstrates how the very notion of infrathin allows us to understand Duchamp's new perspective, in which mimesis is »deconstructed« into operations of conceptual differentiation and »dissimilar similarity«.

Uršula Berlot guides us with erudite scholarly authority through the many dimensions of Duchamp's break, within which the very status of modern art is being modified and the tradition reevaluated.