

INFRA-MINCE or a Secret Murmur¹

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Avant-Propos

When my mother and Marcel began to meet in the early fifties, I spent most of my time at the University and did not meet him immediately. Before the Christmas holidays, my mother told me that Marcel would visit us at our country house in New Jersey. I arrived on Christmas Eve, and went directly to the living room to introduce myself and meet him. However, what I saw first was the Christmas tree. I didn't need to ask who had put it up. Preferring not to deal with the traditional metal support, always a difficult and frustrating procedure, he had fixed the base of the trunk onto one of the ceiling beams, an operation that should not have taken him more than five minutes. The tree was - of course - upside down and as he noted with his usual humor, this orientation left more floor space for gifts. We spent a delightful Christmas together. [...] In 1963, Marcel was delighted to discover that students were ready to pay him to give a lecture about himself. With the help of slides of his work, he recalled his career and improvised descriptions of his works with a lot of humor. At the end of one of his interventions, they were asked if the nonsense that he had used in his works were a true "nonsense." After a perplexed moment, he finally said: "sense and nonsense are two aspects of the same thing and nonsense has the right to live." And yet he continued: "You understand [see] what I mean?" There was a moment of silence and suddenly the room applauded. (*Matisse, Marcel Duchamp Notes*, 1980, p. 9).²

1 This text was developed and expanded from a talk entitled "Infra-mince ou como nomear o imperceptível" delivered at the annual meeting of ANPAP: Associação Nacional dos Pesquisadores em Artes Plásticas, in Belo Horizonte, 2014.

2 Paul Matisse (1933-): grandson of the French painter Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and godson to Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968).

Infra-mince

The *Infra-mince* 'organizes' Marcel Duchamp's ideas as a set of notes evoking sensory aspects and involving perceptions of a sensory order, sensation, language and complexity of word games, or play on words.³ With the *Infra-mince Notes*, Duchamp bequeathed us what I consider his greatest secret, always starting from the imperceptible becoming of sensation. This concept - *Infra-mince* - contains all the power of his work and induces us to think of the plastic, theoretical and even historical character of the *Infra-mince*. In the context of art history, there are few who were interested in the issue of invisibility or sensuality. By making works from almost nothing, from the almost imperceptible or invisible - smoke, breathing, breath - Duchamp brings us the challenge of perceiving the intangibles that make up the ambience that surrounds us. Imagination confronted with nothing or almost nothing, makes us reflect, think, question. This implies the formations of images, contemplation and perception of visual and plastic procedures. I believe Marcel Duchamp is there in the everyday demands of life, in the fun we can have, the mistakes we can make - errors of assessment, understanding of things in the pursuit of understanding of oneself and, above all, in the face of an artistic practice that is not simply surrounded by formal intentions, but rather a praxis that attempts to find a place where the mystery has something to add, something that is not immediately visible. We are speaking of a jubilant work.

Duchamp proposes three ways to write the *Infra-mince*: a graphic of one word:

³ In 1998, I wrote an article about the term "Infra-mince," but from a different approach. Quoting from this work: "Marcel Duchamp left us 46 notes entitled *Infra-mince*. Duchamp operates, in his notes, a subtle mix between ludic and hypersensitive aspects - sometimes sensitive. [...] It is undoubtedly its speculative and ironic character that gives it a tone at once aesthetic incorporating some scientific aspects. [...] *Infra-mince* would be the attribute or adjective Marcel Duchamp used for aesthetic propositions, semantic games, to language, to the set of subtle sensations that make up its 46 notes. *Infra-mince* would, for example, be the last moment of passage through the subway turnstiles: Note No. 9 (right) - 'les gens / qui passent au tout dernier moment *Infra-mince* ". [It would also] be the imponderable moment anything that is sealed, microscopic or infinitesimal, happens. *Infra-mince* [...] the sensation resulting from rubbing a velvet cloth on legs: Note No. 9 (back) - "Pantalons de velours - leur siffotement (dans la) marche par / frottement des 2 jambes est une / séparation *Infra-mince* signalée / par le son (ce n'est pas? un son *Infra-mince*).' The play of tactility and sensuality there becomes apparent with all the evidence " (Franca-Huchet 1998, p. 20). My texts on Duchamp are part of an on-going research project.

"Inframince;" with two words, *infra* followed by *mince*: "Infra mince" and using the hyphen: "infra-mince." One observes that the options for different spellings of the word already makes it an example of what it describes. Duchamp, playing with linguistic forms, indicates through an experimental and written form what we wish to explore theoretically. Thus: when it would then be one word it would concentrate all sense in one stroke, in one glance. Using the space between *Infra mince* suggest the power of plasticity, its spatial distribution, its temporality, its distention. The third option, using the hyphen - as an indication of union or simply a horizontal line - presuppose something separate but also compound. In *Boîte Blanche* (White Box) we find the note "Seek to discuss plastic duration [...] I mean time and space" (Duchamp quoted by Sanouillet, Paris, 1975).

Virtually all of Duchamp notes and his interventions can be defined as a linguistic game, or play, that would include the cliché, proverbs, sayings and aphorisms, as if Duchamp wanted to stretch, or distort, physical realities. "At the level of the word, Duchamp's double pun [*calembour*] is, in most cases, anchored in a dialectic of homophonia / homographia, homonyms / paronymia. All interferences, relationships and combinations of sound / meaning / graphia are used" (Sanouillet, 1975, p. 147). Sanouillet remarks on Duchamp's subversive ardor with regard to language in terms of the word and the sentence, which are often intercut, or cut out, on the structural linguistic level. Paul Matisse - author of *avant-propos* of *Marcel Duchamp Notes* - found them after the artist's death in 1968, adding that he had discovered them in a small packet of handwritten notes that were dated at least fifty years previous to his discovery. In 1976, Teeny Duchamp, Matisse's widow and Paul Matisse's mother asked him to organize them in the order in which they were found. Paul Matisse reports that the order of these notes, published in *Marcel Duchamp Notes*, was almost exactly the notes' order in which he had found them, since Duchamp kept them grouped in different envelopes and folders:

I divided the work into four sections; the first refers to the concept of *Infra-mince*. In the second, were those concerning the *Large Glass* and the third consisted of those that related to different projects. The last section of notes was devoted to word games/plays on words, aphorisms, puns and anagrams. (Matisse, 1980, p. 9)⁴

4 Trans. Note: Translated to English from the Portuguese translation.

Paul Matisse was intrigued by the fact that no explanation accompanied these notes and, to paraphrase Duchamp, said that explanations do not explain anything, and that perhaps the best thing would be, as we can read in the *avant-propos*, to complete the text without comment. But notes inspire and sharpen the senses, and the "linguistic essence of man consists in that which makes him give names to things." (Benjamin, 2000, p. 146).⁵

Note N° 01

The possible is an Infra-mince.

The possibility of many tubes of color become a Seurat; is the concrete "explanation" of the possible as Infra-mince.

Possible implying a becoming - the passage from one to the other takes place in the Infra-mince.

Allegory about "forgetting."

In this note, we observe a certain *mise-en-scène* of reality, a small scene or a small space hosting many color tubes waiting for the opportunity to become a Seurat. Real possibility of a possible as Infra-mince. Duchamp had written his notes around 1930 and Seurat had already become a memory, as he died in 1891 at age 31. His luminous images were the result of the technique he invented: the chrome-luminarism, known familiarly as pointillism. This theory is inspired by the writings of the scientist Michel-Eugène Chevreuil on the law of simultaneous contrast in colors. Other theories influenced him, such as the the critic Charles Blanc's important work *Grammar of Design Arts* (Paris, 1876), and Ogden Rood's scientific theory of colors (New York, 1879). Interested in scientific theories, Seurat was representative of the new generation of painters and artists who proclaimed new conceptions of pictorial space. The theory chromium-luminarism, dear to Seurat, was founded by optics and the idea that light is a combination of many colors; that a number of juxtaposed color dots can, observed from a distance, recompose the unity of tone thus making light vibrate with sensory superiority. However, Seurat was condemned as a positivist for this, being seen as stationed next to the scientific laboratory rather than in relation to the artist's studio. But, as Duchamp defends him: "Among the Impressionists, Seurat interests me more than Cézanne

⁵ "[...] l'essence linguistique de l'homme consiste en ce qu'il nomme les choses."

[...] The only man of the past whom I really respected was Seurat, who approached his huge picture frames like a carpenter, as a craftsman" (Duchamp quoted by De Duve, 1984, p. 250).

In his book *Nominalisme Pictural*, Thierry De Duve asks: But why Seurat? Why not deflect that explanation to declare "the possibility of many color tubes become one Duchamp?." De Duve enters into a long analysis of Note n° 01, undated, and says that the "ready-made color tube is a possible framework" (p. 250). It is true that Note n° 01 speaks of the many color tubes becoming a Seurat as a concrete explanation of *Infra-mince*. One can imagine the colored dots becoming an image, an *Infra-mince* play of tactile explorations of visibility: Seurat building an image [a picture] by gestures, utilizing the scientific observation of light in order to construct it. The possible picture is the possible image, that which cuts and trims with the artistic will of technique, celebrating light and the issue dear to Duchamp of *écart* [interval, difference] and chance, - *hasard* - which he also called the "Regime of Coincidence"⁶ in one of the notes to his famous *Boîte Verte* (Green Box) about his work *Les Trois Stoppages Étalon*. Seurat shows a leap in technical thinking, with his reference as to how the luminous atmosphere of his figural representations works as a physical encounter between color tubes and the pictorial surface. The painter seemed to be interested in the intelligible in his pointillist painting, but wanted to make them sensitive and sensuous. When we look at a painting of his from a certain distance from a frame - image - you see the light modulations: the capacity that the image has to make us perceive and rethink things, going beyond the technical and scientific conception.

Scientific knowledge is considered the most predominant form of knowledge, foun-

6 Regarding "The Regime of Coincidence": Marcel Duchamp's recurring interest and insistence on chance. The Regime of Coincidence appears in a signed note found in *Boîte Verte*, inventoried by the number 1997-96 AM (23). The note is entitled *Regime de la pesanteur* (Regime of gravity) and is in the Cabinet of Graphic Arts of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France. [...] *Régime de la pesanteur Ministère des coïncidences, Département (or mieux): Régime de la coïncidence Ministère de la pesanteur [...]*. [Regime of gravity Ministry of coincidences, Department (or better): the Regime of coincidence, Ministry of gravity [...]]. Duchamp was very interested by the fall, by gravity, which can be seen in several of his works, such as *Trois Étoppages Étalon* whose chance result of the fall of three wires from the height of a meter had their fixed forms in three wooden rulers. We also can recall his famous work *Élevage de poussière*, in which dust falling is cultivated, at random.

ded on reason and logic, on experimentation and verification as method. However, we can observe that there are other paths to knowledge, also remembering the current approach that argues that the main the most important issue lies not the objects themselves, but in the relationship, a given number of phenomena will produce among these objects. Thus, one can consider other approaches to knowledge dealing with the question of meaning. But man does not nourish himself by bread alone, but also by meaning. This is a truly objective reality: Signifying forces exist on the same level as physical forces, of Newtonian or even quantum mechanics. We can affirm that art also provides ways of thought or knowledge, elaborated through the world of the senses.

We humans have a spoken language, which is, at the same time, logical and symbolic, grammatical, but words can seem to signify things other than what they would seem to say. For example, nature: The natural events that surround us - a face, a flower, a tree, an animal - all contain a silent language that inspires us to imagine stories. Mute language is not to be equated with nonsense, but rather, it is up to us to decipher what is being 'told' us to perceive the poetic dimension in our relationship with reality. Thus, part of the Note n° 1 - "implying a possible becoming - the passage from one to the other takes place in Infra-mince" - integrates us into a whole contingency of possible futures, a tenuous perception of the surface [pictorial]. As Didi-Huberman put it: "The phenomenology of Infra-mince would be a phenomenology of outburst" (Didi-Huberman, 1997, p.167). The infra-mince could be perceived as fragility, however it seems to us a great psychic and intelligible exigency: something essential and sharp, touching key issues of the perceptual process.

Note n ° 06

Allegory (usually) is an application of Infra-mince.

Note No. 16

Allegory of "forgetting."

Walter Benjamin conceives of Allegory as a key of knowledge. Allegories, for him, are for the realm of thought what ruins would be in the area of things: "Awareness of the ephemeral nature of things, and the concern to make them eternal, to

save them, is one of the strongest motives for allegory” (Benjamin, 1985, p. 216). The past resurfaces allegorically through the experience of memory, marked by the image. But forget what? We try not to very quickly answer what would be the allegory of oblivion, but remember Walter Benjamin and his position on involuntary memory, when he says that only what was really lived can belong to involuntary memory, since far from restoring to us its fully conserved duration, in Bergson’s sense, involuntary memory releases our mostly unconscious perceptions. The use of allegory - a figure of rhetoric that represents an abstract idea through symbols or poetic images - seems to propose an operation in temporal sense in regards to forgetting. The term allegory in the Note has a much broader meaning than in the first instance, because it applies to a certain type of reading operation. A text is said to be allegorical when it proposes, in a first reading, a certain meaning, when in fact this covers another; thus, the reader is obliged to recover the plays on meaning and the necessary transpositions. Offering a double play to understanding, the allegory tends to hide the semantic target that constitutes the reading of a text and put its production under the sign of transposition of appearances. We were in color tubes in the process of becoming, of transforming into Seurat pictures; the possible would be the place of the future, where the image in becoming then finds its concreteness. The passages of the tubes into the image - and the image technically made by the colors - result in *Infra-mince* modulations. Duchamp seems to propose the ready-made [color tubes] as a proposition to think about painting, but also one to forget painting in the sense in which it was seen and practiced by the dominant art world of the early twentieth century. That said, we perceive a spatial dimension - the becoming of the picture, the image and the possibility of a color tube to become a Seurat, a concrete spatiality of the possible in a temporal dimension. The *Infra-mince* is sensory, it’s infinitesimally perceivable, but there is also a mysterious forgetting. *Infra-mince* and imperceptible intervals of oblivion between two phenomena.

A gap referring to substance of time is what seems to relegate allegory to forgetting. The gap as an *écart Infra-mince* that spatializes something between the memory and the fact, gap as lack, which in turn, may be sought and found. But finding it - or its emergence into consciousness - as it seems to us in Note N° 06, is accompanied by the imagination, by turning to fiction, to the invented. Being

an extended metaphor, the allegory, by saying one thing to make another understood, found a place of confluences in the Duchampian universe, since through it we observe many discursive transpositions. If the allegory is an application of Infra-mince, we can regard it as a shattered phenomenology, but not necessarily a dispersed one, since its relationship with time remains in the enunciation; it is the path we intend to follow here: the polysemic field of forgetfulness is crossed by allegorical forms, modifying and inducing a construction of the forgotten, which once shuffled, rebuilds its parts like the pieces of a puzzle.

We venture to say that we look at the Infra-mince notes as a field of inter-relational and phenomenological convergence. A phenomenon exists that aims to create a conceptual tonality, but with a presence that wants to inhabit space to feel it, describe it, understand it. It must first be spatial. The Infra-mince does not seek clarity in its proposals: but we gain ground, walk and move forward as we also receive the shadows of its secret; the opacity of a phrase that comes back to us with unintended strangeness; when we go down into the abyss, lost, and accept obscurity and ambiguity. We accept obscurity because we feel that the phenomena are juxtaposed in many planes that sometimes sound just like nonsense games, but we know that, for Duchamp, questions are not satisfied with a single answer.

There is a polarity between allegory and forgetting: on the one hand we forget something, we erase it; on the other we allegorize, we think figuratively, fictionalizing. All of painting could be understood through this dialectic. An image asks to be found. A moment to recall Marcel Duchamp's provocative picture *La Mariée*.⁷

After the uncomfortable atmosphere surrounding his painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, Duchamp embarked on a trip to Munich in the summer of 1912. He had been saddened by and bored with the dialogue between the picture and the Parisian art world. He saw the horizon of his work barred, misunderstood, which made him dive into a particular melancholy. He chose Munich precisely because it is an important center of painting in Europe. Many artists were there or had passed

⁷ Marcel Duchamp, *La Marrie*. 1912, Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 55.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950 - Schwarz n°253. In English, known as *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors*, but most often referred to as *The Large Glass (La Grande Verre)*. This image can be accessed through: <http://www.wikiart.org/en/marcel-duchamp/transition-of-virgin-into-a-bride-1912>.

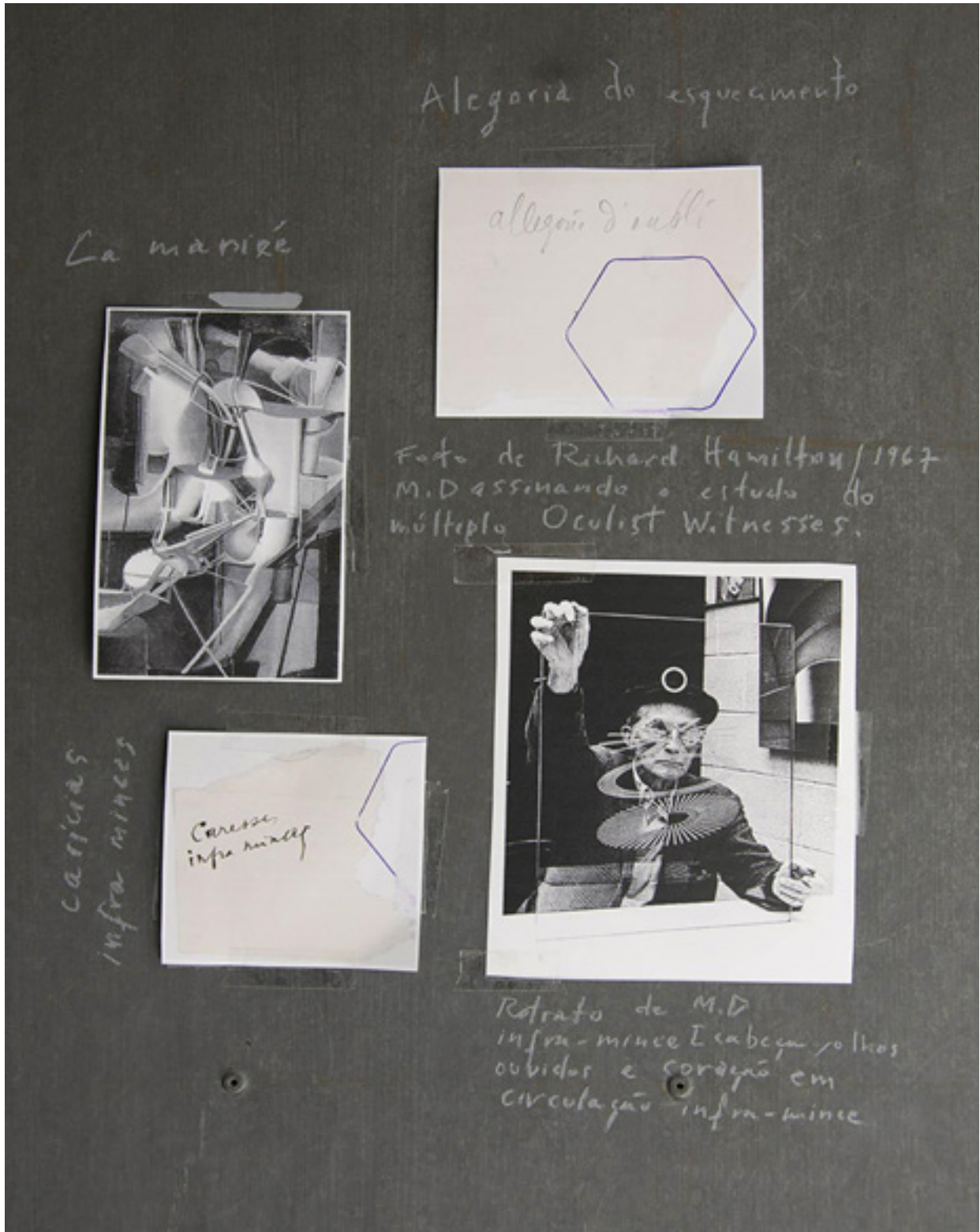


Figure1- Montage I made from documentation on Marcel Duchamp, 2015.

through Munich; Klee, Kandinsky, De Chirico, Delaunay and Marcel Duchamp said, himself, that his stay in Munich would be a complete liberation for him. Visiting museums in Basel, Vienna, Dresden, and Berlin he was struck by the new cultural environment.

He was very moved by Cranach's *Venus*, whose carnal representation impressed him significantly. He outlined the general plan for a large work there, in a very large format that would engage him for long time, presenting him with many challenging technical problems. These were the premises of the *Large Glass*,⁸ which is displayed together with the *Passage de la Vierge a la Mariée* (the painting *La mariée*, 1912), whose very careful execution, inspired by the German pictorial technique - the painter Cranach in particular - reveals a new artistic interest for Duchamp, helping him overcome difficulties he had encountered in Paris. "I love these Cranach ... I adore them [...]" he would exclaim. "The nature and substance of his nudes inspired me for the color of the flesh [...]"⁹ He saturated himself with the velvet like textures used in the paintings, also employing *glacis*,¹⁰ a pictorial technique that brought out the inherent light of the canvas. For Robert Lebel, these techniques of embodiment "dive into the depths of the organic unconscious" (Lebel, 1966, p.15).¹¹ This work would constitute the superior or topmost part of *Large Glass*.

It is a small vertical painting, 80 x 55 cm, which features an unreal painted representation, but done with extreme realism. It was executed in gray, beige and pink and the figure appears to result from a hybridization of organs and mechanical elements that seem to morph anatomy - female organs - also evoking an insect,

8 *Le Grand Verre / O Grande Vidro / The Large Glass*. Duchamp's work, whose original name was *La mariée mise a nu par ses celibataires*, was done between 1915 and 1923 in New York. Oil, varnish, lead leaves and dust posited between two panels. Dimensions: 277.5 X 175.9 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. This image can be accessed through: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bride_Stripped_Bare_by_Her_Bachelors,_Even.

9 Radio France. Marcel Duchamp. *A bruit Secret. Une vie une oeuvre*. Radio program produced by Bárbara Turquier and Nathalie Batthus. November 23, 2013.

10 *Glacis (glacís)*, is a pictorial technique invented by German Renaissance painters: Cranach The Elder (1472-1553), Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Hans Holbein (1465-1524), among others.

11 Note Nº 13 and Lebel's quote are found in the Pedagogical Dossier *Marcel Duchamp et la Peinture Mème*. Direction des Publics. Texte: Marie Jose Rodriguez. From the Exhibition in the Centre Georges Pompidou. Paris. September 24, 2014 to January 5, 2015.

something machinic. The sexuality that it radiates is corroborated by overlapping the title, referring to a woman. As André Breton describes it:

The bride is, basically, an engine, but before becoming [perceived as] an engine that transmits its timid power, she incorporates [exudes] her own timid power, a kind of "automobile," an essence of love that distributes to the very weak cylinders sparking her constant life, and serves as the budding impetus for the virgin to come to terms with her desire. " (André Breton cited by Lebel, 1966, p. 88).¹²

La Mariée it is an evocative picture. The shattered body in motion implies sexuality. Paradoxically, it seems to remind us of the mechanics and invisibility of *Infra-mince* in deep, visceral desire. A poetic manner in which Duchamp can convey his insights, saying, himself, that he did not want to be a pseudo Cézanne and that he had begun to use his spirit instead of brushes. This corresponded well to his idea of painting, a modified idea of painting with different possibilities for accomplishing his purposes. One can well ask: How did Marcel Duchamp, himself, approach painting? To interpret the *Mariée* and the shattered *La Mariée* exposes the simultaneous absence and presence of a space and a time. The body constituted the primary issue. Asymmetry and dissimilarity are expressive in the work in a way that represents where the work is going in the spatial and temporal sense. Form permitted movement, preserving both its depth and its fervent surface. Indeed, form created a third dimension that found its own spatiality and temporality, but without reducing it simply to geometric inventiveness. As in Proust, it temporalized form, which seems to be an arduous struggle against forgetting: It is the moment in which depth becomes temporal, when we are able to find and recapture the moment in its thickness, in its opacity, in its kernel, in its substance. Something that painting and writing are capable of restituting for us. *La Mariée* has its enigma. The word enigma and not mystery. We are helpless before those forms that will, or will not, allow our observing gaze to explode in appreciation of them.

12 "la mariée a sa base est un moteur, mais avant d'être un moteur qui transmet sa puissance timide, elle est sa puissance timide même, une sorte d'automobile, une essence d'amour qui distribué aux cylindres bien faibles a porté des étincelles de sa vie constante, sers a l'épanouissement de la vierge arrivé au terme de son désir". Breton, André. Phare de la mariée, In: Minotaure, n° 06, 1935, quoted by Robert Lebel. Sur Marcel Duchamp, opus. cit., p. 88-94.

Note nº 02

Infra-mince Analogue

Note nº 46

Infra-mince

Light reflections on different roughly polished surfaces.

Unpolished reflections giving an effect of reflection - mirror in depth - could serve as optical illustration to the idea of Infra-mince as "conductor" from the 2nd to the 3rd dimension.

Irisation as a particular case of the reflection.

- Mirror and reflection in a maximum mirror of this passage from the 2nd to the 3rd dimension - (incidentally / because the eyes "become accustomed to themselves" in a mirror?).

Just now I posed the question: How did Duchamp regard the question of the painting? Now, I wonder how he thought about the issue of apparition, of the phenomenon itself, since the issue of perception of minuscule things appears as a major issue in his notes. Considering that analogy is the similarity between different things, we come to the polarity of reflexivity. A covariance of reflections: I see the world that is entirely reflected in my consciousness; reflexivity being in this text a reference to the dialectical pole of the Infra-mince analogy.

In addition to the phenomenological aspect that we attribute to the Note, we know that Duchamp liked math, reflexivity being in this field a binary relationship in which each element is compared with itself. Thus, Marcel Duchamp appears as an artist who understood the landscape of his time and the fundamental concepts that crossed through it. In the twentieth century, the concept of reflexivity as well as the transcendental quality of consciousness, itself, were debated by many thinkers: Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology; the hermeneutics of Heidegger, Gadamer and Taylor; Habermas' pragmatic form; Tugendhat's analytical form; and the Frankfurt School. Marcel Duchamp presented reflexivity in his notes with the artistic freedom that suited him, however wryly. The loving irony that we understand as the form of a lit match [game]. Another issue here is: What is the relationship that Duchamp can construct on consciousness understood as a mode of reflectivity? This is certainly not the time to analyze the theories of the above philosophers, but considering Duchamp under the aegis of the phenomenology of perception of the image, of time, of things and phantasy, we can assert that his artistic operational

mode has the distinct character of reflective intuitiveness and, at times, is allegedly scientific.¹³ Face to face with the positional character of perception, the issue of individuation intervenes obliquely, here. So sometimes we are left without words in front of the artist's enigmatic notes. It might be thought that despite all the mystery and radicalism stored in these little notes, a dialogue between the artist and philosophy is going on. But when we tend to look from a diagonal perspective, our imagination can become eloquent.

Iridescence as a particular case of the reflection. Clear enunciation that allows us to relate the sensory experience with the exercise of Infra-mince. Occasion for the observation of sensory substances and to switch our attention to these aspects, which are usually neglected. Duchamp exposes the material side of light, its irisation coloring a reflection of Infra-mince. One hypothesis: the irisation seen by Duchamp through droplets of a jet of water from a hose watering flowers in a garden on a summer afternoon. In fact, we cannot deny that the language of the Infra-mince encompasses a contemplative inquiry that renders the conventional logic of ordinary perception useless to capture its flexible dimension, which contains the tenuous materiality of things that surround it. A possible Infra-mince: reflective irisation - the pressure of water forcing its way between tightly closed fingers produces an Infra-mince jet of water. Colors surge up from the movement of light through the shattering droplets.

At the end of Note n° 46, we find this sentence: "Mirror and reflection in a maximum mirror of this passage from the 2nd to the 3rd dimension - (incidentally / because the eyes "become accustomed to themselves" in a mirror?)." Difficult reflective triangulations. Could it be that the mirror devours images? While we are looking at the mirror we know we're not there, in it, but we accommodate to what we see in the mirror, we allow ourselves to reflect. We see part of our image on a surface, the surface is clear; we see reflectivity on the roughly polished surface, but even so, something is swallowed by it at the same time that the reflection is given back to our gaze. The mirror would be a topological space of elasticity and

13 Duchamp admired the sciences and mathematics, and in some of his Notes - besides those that make up the group on the Infra-mince - we see drawings with numbers and perspectives as if they were equations that sought to demonstrate, with humor, a scientific, ludic and sensitive dimension.

circulation between inside and outside, the images diluting the specular body. Nonetheless, a point that crosses our subjectivity can create a third dimension, since we always, always, transposing the inside out and the outside in. Thus, the mirror is one of the simplest ways to address the issue of reflection. It's an everyday object that reflects the outside world; in a small confined space, it encompasses, in its unity, the passing images, often deforming them, creating illusion. It puts into question the subject's image, which is a central node of reflections on identity, knowledge and representation of oneself. Through reflection, the mirror is an Infra-mince analogy, as it identifies and differs.

We cannot forget the metaphoric effects that the mirror creates and imposes upon language: we understand that we are experiencing the effects of specularity, *mise-en-abyme*, duplication. Playing between distance and separation, the mirror produces a situation of exchange between the image and reflection, and as a simulacrum, is handmaiden to fiction, phantasy and imagination. Indeed, for these reasons the mirror has become such an important object of the Infra-mince lexicon, interpolating Marcel Duchamp's proposal of the "between the two," of relationship and mediation. A model that oscillates between contemplation and action.

Jean-François Lyotard adopts the Duchampian notion of "*miroirique*" - an untranslatable French neologism, derived from the word *miroir* (mirror) - that refers to the transformations and deformations to which all that is reflected in a mirror's surface is submitted. These - if Duchamp will allow us? - can be understood as machinations; the mirror is like a reproductive machine, mimetic and masking; here again, *écart*. Distance and estrangement produced by the specular movement of the particular reflective surface. The reflective device and the reflector combine for an Infra-mince scene of unique depth, demonstrating a transforming fidelity, one that conducts all relations of disjunctive or inclusive affect since it makes us hesitate in regards to our logical and cognitive situation. We experience the door of Duchamp's *11 rue Larrey* in a similar way: open but also closed. Something thus "differs," in the sense temporalizing and spatializing produces differences.

Machinations, the mirror as a reproductive and mimetic machine: the distance and estrangement produced by the reflected image through any kind of mirroring surface. "Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass* is "*miroirique*": the spaces of the mariée and her bachelors look at each other, but they are dissimilar, neither overlapping

nor congruent.” (Lyotard, 1977, p.52) *The Large Glass* is a crystal of time. We recall here that Gilles Deleuze thought about time - among other things - through the image-crystal. The crystal image is not time, but we see time in the crystal. There are different states of the crystal according to the stage of its formation. For the philosopher, each of formative stages is called a crystal time. Deleuze used the vocabulary of minerals to baptize the particular image which he says is accurate to disclose the nature of time: the image-crystal. Associated to cinema, it would reveal a coalescent virtue - allowing separate parts, or elements, to adhere together - thus realizing and spatializing plastic qualities in a way that allows us to describe them.

Mirror in depth: How to save or preserve the depth of meaning, its fervent side? Infra-mince: *deja vu*. The impression of living a perceptual time in duplicate. The past seeming to take the form of the present, but not a past that would be the past, nor recollection and remembrance, but the past that would be the past of this present, coexisting with the perception and lived knowledge of experience. So, in this manner, the idea of a time that artists and researchers know and work with is not chronological time.

I can think of the voice in terms of Infra-mince. Between the Infra-mince and the convergence of two inter-relational poles, as occurrence, between the concept of Infra-mince and all that resonates from it, between the self as interlocutor where the phenomenon that creates language happens. This inter-relational convergence has been well and continuously studied in linguistics, and in fascinating ways. We talk to each other and crib discursive proposals from each other, a dynamic that leaves a little something that remains in my own voice.

Infra-mince and the listening voice: the voice is vibratory and sometimes caressing [infra-mince gravitating to the sphere of nonsense in which we are voiceless].

Marcel Duchamp proposed the Infra-mince as an altered experience, a way letting ourselves become intoxicated by matter and through the senses experienced with matter. Art allowed him to live suspended in a multitude of questions: It's the role of the artist to invent a language to fill the space of what does not exist, the artist then creates what has not been capable of being expressed figuratively.

Note n° 03

“Shadow Carrier”

Corporation of shadow carriers represented by all light sources (sun, moon, stars, candles, fire -).

Incidentally:

Different aspects of reciprocity - association of fire-light (black light, fire-without-smoke = certain light sources)

Shadow carriers work in the Infra-mince.

To interpret symptoms is to work in the shadows. One may think of the elaboration of shadow carriers as the embodiment of symptoms illuminating the knowledge of oneself. They - the corporation - carry shadows but are represented by all light sources. However, the different aspects of reciprocity create very peculiar associations, such as black light or a fire without smoke.

Symptoms are manifestations of shadow because they emerge from the unconscious depths to the corporeal world. Therefore, we can all consider ourselves to be shadow carriers. The frightening or recuperated shadows that make their carriers work from within their deepest interior are Infra-mince. But how symbolic is Note n° 03? The key to its secret seems to us to be in its intuitive reception more than in its analysis. The obscure side is next to the luminous side and the interdependence of these two opposites is so complementary! Different aspects of reciprocity may seem mutually exclusive polarities, but perceived more closely, they form a unit.

The measure of the Infra-mince shadow.

It would be difficult for us to deny Marcel Duchamp’s cryptic and symbolic dimension. Herman Parret discusses how “we are accustomed to so many interpretations of Marcel Duchamp’s possible hermeneutics: esoteric (Breton); alchemical (Sanoillet, Lebel, Pontus Hulten, Linde); Freudian and Jungian (Schwarz); cabalistic (Burhnam); shamelessly religious (Calvesi); sweetly symbolic (Paz) [...]” (Parret, 2010, p. 17). Herman Parret denies the symbolic side of Duchamp’s work, subscribing more to Duchamp’s machinic and wily side. This is quite the opposite from my argument. I do not believe that an artist can create such a notion without being conscious of his artistic intention, of his eroticism as evidence, his silent intentions,

and his subversive language that, above all, creates doubts about so many certainties. Duchamp? Who was always closely attuned to the signs of his time, distrusting to look for the perfect things and considering the somber and challenging side in his experiences? Parret mentions:

... mistrust of allegory, symbolism. The signifier does not signify "the serious" through the symbolic convention of language, by message art or expressive art, but rather it signifies, by chance, metonymic associations [...] art does not count for anything, remits to nothing, it syntagmatizes the concave and convex, the full and empty, the penis and the vulva according to the indicial geometry of *Infra-mince* (Parret, 2010, p.19).

The lesson of *Infra-mince* would be lost forever in such cold and circumscribed analyzes as this one. If eroticism was for him the exact question, how to define it only as something that counts for nothing and remits to nothing? What would be the phrase or work that does not remit, or refer, to something? As readers and viewers, we are free to understand and decipher the *Infra-mince* without enclosing it in semiotic or other categories.

I propose ending this passage with Note nº 03, with a semantic constellation pinched out of the Duchampian notes on *Infra-mince*: magnifying glass [to play], shadow, fire, light, sun, moon, stars, candle, black light, mirror reflection, cobweb, colors, silk, velvet, water, molten lead, pitted paper, transparencies, liquids, cream, caresses, air, men, trees, boats, smells, reflections, flower, voice, trousers, mold, rifle, arrow, animal, vegetable, eye, heat, similarity, painting, letter paper, day, cone, photo, film, etc.

We think about the cultivation of nonsense

All knowledge lends itself to an act of birth. We don't come across a scientific, rigorous, or organized way of thinking in the *Regime of Coincidences*. Let us remember Husserl, who created an admirable system of interrogating meaning. To wonder about the world of meaning and the world of the symbolic, which is the language of the unconscious. Etymologically, symbol comes from the Greek *simbolon*, which means that which brings together, that comes to unite, connecting the visible and the invisible, the conscious and the unconscious, the imaginary and the real world.

Art would be, within this context, an open space that is created between the world of meaning and the world of ordinary reality. In his Notes, Duchamp seemed to explore something that organizes and structures the world of meaning and the ways in which we can connect with it.

I purposely chose the word 'mince' that is a human and affective word and not an accurate laboratory measure. The sound or music made by the friction of velvet trousers as one moves is linked to the concept of Infra-mince. The emptiness between the front and back of a thin sheet of paper ... To be studied! ... It is a category to which I have dedicated myself a lot during the last ten years. I think that through the Infra-mince it is possible to go from the second to the third dimension (Duchamp quoted by Dworkin, 2013, p. 18).¹⁴

This testimony makes us believe that Duchamp seemed to take artistic perception to new limits. Somewhere between the concreteness of a table [language] and the chessboard on the table [the unconscious attention to the game]. In other words, something that exceeded art; we pass on to the hyperbole of what goes beyond itself, to the limit-experience. But almost always in the game something intensifies: all of a sudden, we are overcome by vertigo, we are blinded. As a problem of time: the game being playing and expanding on itself, but in order to try to find the moves. The experience is more active than ever. Apprehending this, we want to then make abstractions, reflections, and finally the link between sensory and sense shows itself as something complex that survives on permanent comings and goings. Art is a motive to knowledge, one that produces a certain relationship with time and that consists to produce meaning, feeling, thinking. And in his notes Duchamp was looking for words to describe what is happening around us: that which can be transcribed from its invisibility.

To live according to nuance, as Barthes said, is to live to produce nuances, to invent small differences; it is a very difficult project, a very

14 "J'ai choisi exprès le mot mince qui est un mot humain et affectif et non une mesure précise de laboratoire. Le bruit ou la musique faits par un pantalon de velours côtelé comme celui ci quand on le fait bouger est lié au concept d'Infra-mince. Le creux dans le papier entre le recto et le verso d'une fine feuille... A étudier!... C'est une catégorie dont je me suis beaucoup occupé pendant ces dix dernières années. Je pense qu'au travers de l'Infra-mince, il est possible d'aller de la seconde à la troisième dimension" [English translated from the French, trans.]

demanding ethic, but it seems inevitable to me today. And ... once we open our eyes, [and] we prick up our ears, we taste the subtleties of *Infra-mince*, deep down, the invisible, the nothingness, or almost nothingness that occupies an entire space, a place, and this is its triumph. (Thierry Davila, interview, Radio France Culture).¹⁵

The *Infra-mince*, then, is all this: it acts to reveal singularities in what appears and disappears before us, to open our eyes to facets of matter that we are unable to apprehend.

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¹⁵ From the author's translation of a fragment from an interview with Thierry Davila, conducted by Alain Veinstein on the occasion of the the launch of his book *De L'Infra-mince*. Radio France Culture. November 29, 2010.

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