

Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain' as a Work of Art

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To begin with, the art of the modern and postmodern ages is often used as a platform and a tool for the discussion of significant philosophical and social issues. To add more, such art pieces are also used to introduce an artist's position concerning art's place and role in human society. As a result, some pieces appear to be considerably disputable and unclear for an audience to understand; there are works that cause significant discussions on their true meaning and even on whether they can be considered as pieces of art. One piece of art that is still actively discussed by art specialists and the wider community is 'Fountain' by Marcel Duchamp. Despite the fact that some state that this piece can barely be considered as art, it still can be viewed as one because it displays the great artistic mastership of the author that appears in the irony and absurdity of 'Fountain' and the fact that it is significantly thought-provoking and reflects the meaning of art itself.

First of all, it is necessary to say that the discussion on the artistic nature of 'Fountain' by Duchamp is caused by the usual, simple, and even primitive shape of the piece; it is a typical white urinal that is signed as 'R. Mutt 1917' ("'Fountain', Marcel Duchamp, 1917", 2018). Due to the fact that the piece does not include any artistic work of Duchamp himself since the artist just purchased a urinal, signed it, and submitted it, it caused a significant discussion in the artistic community and society of that time. In addition, individuals who are against considering 'Fountain' a piece of art claim that it does not present any artistic idea and is indecent to expose to a wide audience ("'Fountain', Marcel Duchamp, 1917", 2018). Nonetheless, these arguments are successfully contradicted by artists and intellectuals who introduce a number of convincing points supporting 'Fountain' being an artwork.

One of the main arguments for the artistic merit of 'Fountain' is the fact that even though the piece was not made directly by Duchamp, the artist has still put his creative ideas in the work. In particular, he has introduced a usual object that human beings observe and use all the time from a different and significantly unusual perspective. This point is well presented by the artist Beatrice Wood who stated that Duchamp's artistic creative work can be seen in his choice of the object and further use of it: "he took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object" (Mann, 2017). As follows, the nature of the used object is not important because it is Duchamp's idea that makes it an artwork and creates the artistic meaning and value of it.

Furthermore, the particular conception of 'Fountain' also displays the piece's artistic value, as it required significant creative thinking of the author and his ability to introduce his ideas to an audience in a unique way (Mann, 2017). This factor can be observed in the fact that Duchamp came up with the conception of the piece and managed to put life into it by using unusual tools. The display of one's ideas with the objects that initially have been developed for entirely different purposes has been seen as art in different art ages and movements. Furthermore, art theorists point out the fact that Duchamp had been working in this specific field of art even before he introduced 'Fountain' (Mann, 2017). As a result, one can assume that the use of the urinal in the art piece is not accidental but on the contrary, a considerably usual aspect of Duchamp's work, and the resulting thoughtfulness and sense of purpose make 'Fountain' a piece of art.

Notably, some specialists in the field approach the process of creating the piece from another perspective that Duchamp had seen the urinal and after that, had come up with the conception of 'Fountain' (Mann, 2017). In this case, the piece is also proven to be an artwork

because it displays the artist's ability to view usual objects from creative perspectives and observe them as potential pieces of art. Gayford states that 'Fountain' "was unexpectedly a rather beautiful object in its own right and a blindingly brilliant logical move, check-mating all conventional ideas about art" (2008). This point supports the claim that 'Fountain' is an artwork, as it highlights the fact that Duchamp managed to transform and reuse a mundane object in a way it had not been viewed before.

Finally, a significant factor that displays the artistic nature of 'Fountain' by Duchamp is the fact that the piece strongly relates to the concept of art itself and the reflection on the meaning of art. It should be pointed out that the self-reflection of the art has been one of the main ideas covered in art pieces of all ages, and modern art of the beginning of the 20th century is no exception to this phenomenon (Gayford, 2008). To be more precise, the particular idea that can be viewed in 'Fountain' is the issue of modern art and artists taking themselves too seriously, and Duchamp developed a piece that goes against this tendency. Gayford notes that "a great deal of modern art is meant to be amusing," and this claim is caused by the fact that 20th century art needed the element of irony (2008). Numerous pieces of the 20th century art used to be aimed at discussing significant ideas and issues in a serious way that resulted in over-complicated and pseudo-intellectual pieces that were not appealing to a wide audience, nor to 'intellectuals.' 'Fountain' by Duchamp is one of the first pieces of art that displays a great deal of self-irony and reflection on the true meaning of art. The use of a urinal as a piece of art shows the real simplicity of art and its need for not taking itself too seriously; this philosophical conception effectively introduced in 'Fountain' is one of the reasons of Duchamp has been compared to da Vinci as "a profound philosopher-artist" (Gayford, 2008).

All things considered, one can conclude that 'Fountain' is a piece of art for several reasons, which are the creativity of the artist and the significant artistic meaning of the piece. In particular, even though Duchamp did not make 'Fountain' by himself, he turned the used object into an artwork by adding his creative vision, conception, and meaning to it. Also, the author has used the piece to reflect on the meaning of art, and this is one of the main topics covered in 20th-century artwork.

References

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