

3.0

# DUCHAMP IN BUENOS AIRES

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## Press release

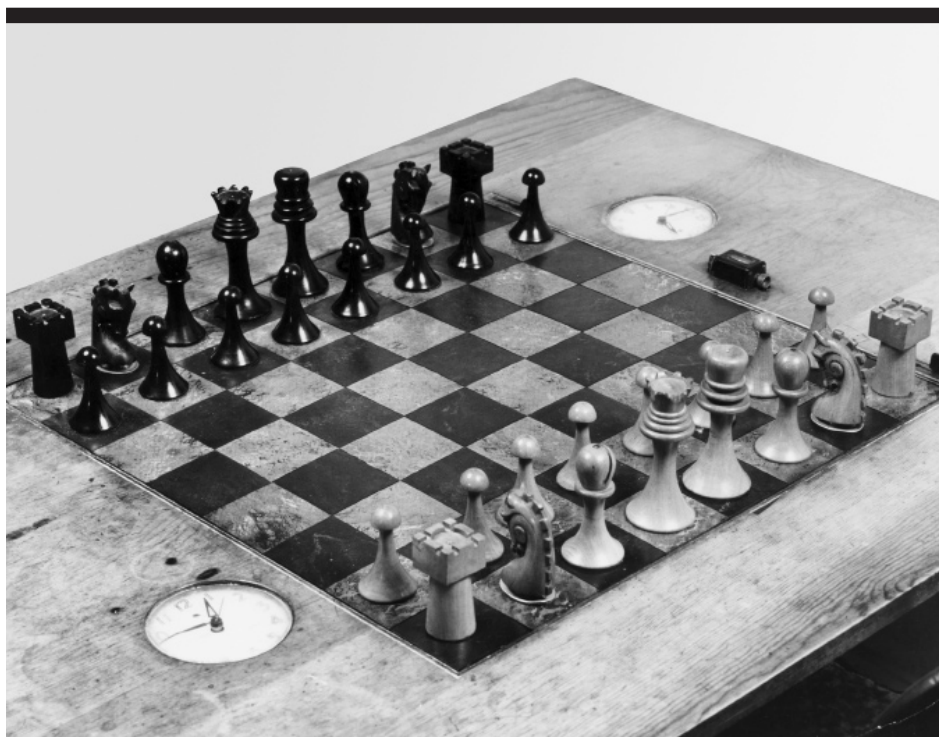
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Buenos Aires Chess Pieces,  
1918-19  
Private collection  
© Succession Marcel Duchamp,  
2008, ADAGP/Paris,  
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## Exhibition

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**Marcel Duchamp: a work that is  
not a work "of art"**

From 11.22.08  
Until 02.01.09

### Open

Tuesday to Sunday from 11.00 to 19.00  
Monday closed

**Admission \$ 10,**  
Students \$ 6, Senior citizens \$ 3

**Curator**  
Elena Filipovic

**Sponsors**  
Tenaris – Ternium  
Organización Techint

**Organizaton and production**  
Fundación PROA

**General directors**  
Jorge Helft and Adriana Rosenberg

● CD:

– Gonzalo\_Aguilar.doc  
– MD\_Lifeandwork.doc  
– MD\_Letters.doc

## 3.1

## Voyage to the City of the Fourth Dimension

By Gonzalo Aguilar

● Gonzalo\_Aguilar.doc  
(complete text)

*The following extracts belong to the text **Voyage to the City of the Fourth Dimension**, by Gonzalo Aguilar, from the **Catalogue of the exhibition Marcel Duchamp: A Work That is Not a Work 'of art'**, FUNDACIÓN PROA, Buenos Aires, 2008.*

(...)  
During the nine months that he was in our city, accompanied by Yvonne Chastel, Duchamp lived at 1734 Alsina Street, apartment 2, and he had his studio a few blocks away at 1507 Sarmiento Street. In addition to becoming a chess “maniac”—in his own words—the artist produced four works while he was in our country: *À regarder (l'autre côté du verre) d'un oeil, de près, pendant presque une heure* (To Be Looked at [from the Other Side of the Glass] with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour) (a study for the lower part of *Le Grand Verre* [The Large Glass], the optical experiment *Stéréoscopie à la main* (Hand Stereoscopy), a set of chess pieces (whose knight was sculpted by a Buenos Aires cabinet-maker), and the *Readymade malheureux* (Unhappy Readymade) that he sent to his sister Suzanne as a wedding present. Although he had no intention of exhibiting his work, he visited galleries and contacted art dealers. His objective was “to cubify B.A.” by organizing an avant-garde exhibit intended to violently modernize the city..

(...)  
The first mystery to clear up is why Duchamp left New York and chose Buenos Aires as his next destination. The artist himself—in a letter to Jean Crotti—wrote that there were “**many reasons**” and he mentioned “**a strain in the**

**relationship with the Arensbergs.**”

However, the strongest hypothesis that we have at this time is one that we might refer to as the military hypothesis. In addition to his abhorrence of the United States’ entrance into the Great War, as he explained in his conversations with Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp ran the risk of being recruited into the army (in fact, his decision to travel on the steamship “Crofton Hall,” as he wrote in a letter to Crotti dated July 8, 1918, depended on “if the boat of August 4th is not requisitioned by the United States, we should take it”). Duchamp was what today would be called a “draft-dodger” (those who refuse to serve in the army) and his best option was to leave the United States..

(...)  
The image of Duchamp as the herald of avant-garde art is confirmed when considering his project “to cubify B.A.” To realize this aim, Duchamp visited galleries and corresponded by letter and telegram with his art-dealer friends in New York requesting that they send him “thirty works” of Cubism. The most obvious precedent for this type of operation was, without a doubt, the Armory Show that was held in New York in 1913, which introduced North Americans to avant-garde art.  
(...)

## 3.2

## Marcel Duchamp. Life and work

By Hugo Petruschansky, in collaboration with Cecilia Iida and Clelia Taricco

● MD\_Lifeandwork.doc  
(complete text)

*The following are extracts from the chapter **Life and work**, by Hugo Petruschansky, in collaboration with Cecilia Iida and Clelia Taricco, from the **Catalogue of the exhibition Marcel Duchamp: a work that is not a work 'of art'**, FUNDACIÓN PROA, Buenos Aires, 2008.*

In 1915, Marcel Duchamp would declare, “Personally, I should say that I admire the attitude of combating the invasion with folded arms.” The freedom that he had discovered in New York would fade away three years later when the United States entered the war. His stated antimilitary stance would push him into a new exile. There are few references that might allow us to elucidate the reason that led him to choose Argentina as his destination. Perhaps it was recalling Roussel’s theater piece *Impressions d’Afrique*, that had left such an impression on him in 1912, whose mad plot included Buenos Aires. It could be that he simply wanted to distance himself from the war and New York’s social circle. As he would say at the time, “I have a vague intention of staying down there for a long time . . . several years very likely—which is to say basically breaking completely with this part of the world.” He has a stay of one or two years in mind, this is certain, just as he wrote to Picabia, and he travels without concrete plans and without knowing anyone there. The enigmatic aspect of his destination is manifest in a drawing that he would send to Florine Stettheimer before leaving. In it, a dotted line traces his itinerary along the American continent. Between opposing arrows, he writes: “27 days + 2 years” and the Argentinean capital is indicated with an enormous question mark. Duchamp and Yvonne Chastel arrive in Buenos Aires aboard the Crofton Hall in September of 1918. In Buenos Aires, “There really is the scent of peace, which is wonderful to breathe, and a provincial tranquility, which allows and even forces me to work.”

## 3.3

## Letters from Buenos Aires

● MD\_Letters.doc

*The following are extracts from the letters selected for the chapter included in the **Catalogue of the exhibition Marcel Duchamp: a work that is not a work “of art”**, FUNDACIÓN PROA, Buenos Aires, 2008.*

“... Je joue aux échecs seul pour l’instant; j’ai trouvé des revues dans lesquelles j’ai découpé une quarantaine de parties de Capablanca, que je vais to play over\_ Je vais aussi probablement entrer au Chess Club d’ici, pour m’essayer de nouveau.  
Je me suis fait faire un “set” de tampons en caoutchouc (que j’ai dessinés) avec lesquels je marque des parties. J’en envoie ici un exemplaire pour Walter...”

Letter to Louise Arensberg, Buenos Aires, January 7th and 10th (1919).

“— Je fais des échecs en masse. Je fais partie du Club ici où il y a de très forts joueurs classés par catégories. Je n’ai pas eu l’honneur d’être classé encore et je joue avec différents joueurs de 2me catégorie et 3me perdant et gagnant de temps en temps.

Je prends des leçons d’échecs avec le meilleur joueur du club qui enseigne admirablement et me fait faire des progrès “théoriques”\_

Donc j’avais pensé qu’à mon retour en France je pourrais peut-être jouer par câble avec Walter\_

Si J’ai trouvé dans un livre, la f manière de jouer par câble réduisant les frais tél d’envoi\_

Je vous en fais une description et vous demande de garder ce papier jusqu’à Juillet\_ Si vous receviez un cable bizarre de France, ce serait le début d’une partie d’échecs.”

Letter to Louise and Walter Arensberg, end of March 1919.



“... I was able to work a lot with no cafe life or evenings out. I have thrown myself into the game of chess. I belong to the local club and, out of 24 hours in a day, I spend a good number there...”

Letter to Jean Crotti, Sunday 9 March 1919.

Unknown photographer  
**Marcel Duchamp playing chess**, ca. 1959  
 Succession Marcel Duchamp, Villiers sous Grez, Francia  
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