



The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology

Robert Motherwell (Editor)

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The Dada Painters and Poets offers the authentic answer to the question "What is Dada?" This incomparable collection of essays, manifestos, and illustrations was prepared by Robert Motherwell with the collaboration of some of the major Dada figures: Marcel Duchamp, Jean Arp, and Max Ernst among others. Here in their own words and art, the principals of the movement create a composite picture of Dada--its convictions, antics, and spirit.

First published in 1951, this treasure trove remains, as Jack Flam states in his foreword to the second edition, "the most comprehensive and important anthology of Dada writings in any language, and a fascinating and very readable book." It contains every major text on the Dada movement, including retrospective studies, personal memoirs, and prime examples. The illustrations range from photos of participants, in characteristic Dadaist attitudes, to facsimiles of their productions.

The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology Details

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Zheng Tao says

Absolutely fucking brilliant. I'd read this every night before I go to bed, if only if that wouldn't traumatize me.

Brian says

This is my Bible.

Steve says

This is an outstanding anthology filled with indescribable nonsense and radical posturings that make the Dada movement so fascinating and still relevant. Dada was so incendiary that Surrealism seemed like two steps back. Check this out for plenty of inspiration from inspired lunatics who made astounding art.

Garry says

YES! Indeed verily this is the Dada handbook written in their own hand. Complete with manifestos and first person sources. Contains countless valuable insights for those wishing to understand Garry W. Shores in more than a cursory manner

Jacob says

Opinions of the individual Dada writers aside: as an anthology and a collection of historical literature this book is fantastic. Without a doubt the best way to have an in-depth familiarity of Dada and its significance.

But the title is somewhat misleading, this isn't really an art book. There are few images and all in black and white (I recommend Dietrich et al's "Dada" for a visual anthology). There isn't really that much poetry either (these dorks did write a lot of poetry). It's mostly manifestos (and some letters and such), but that is the written form the Dadaists seemed to use the most.

However, I find the inclusion of most of the post-1930 texts to be unnecessary/irrelevant while important texts from the movement's active period were omitted:

Walter Serner's *The Swig About the Axis Manifesto*, 1919 and *The Last Loosening Manifesto*, 1918
George Ribemont-Dessaigne's *Manifesto*, 1920
Hugo Ball's *Dada Manifesto*, 1916

Picabia's *Manifeste Cannibale Dada*, 1920
Huelsenbeck's *En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism*, 1920
Schwitters' *A Dramatic Fragment*

As well as the sound poetry of Schwitters and Ball (though obv. you have to listen to it but still needs mention)

Some excerpts from Tzara's plays would've been nice as well, but it's still the best Dada literature resource available.

Philippe Malzieu says

The movement dada always fascinated me in particular Raoul Hausmann, poète, photographer and painter. That Motherwell was interested in this subject was very exciting. Néo-expressionism versus dada confrontation is fertile. This book success in describe dada status of thinking. Very interesting?

Eddie Watkins says

Pulled this off my shelf this morning looking for a bit of inspiration and opened directly to:

Hugo Ball: *Dada Fragments* (1916-1917)

The Dadaist trusts more in the sincerity of events than in the wit of persons. To him persons may be had cheaply, his own person not excepted. He no longer believes in the comprehension of things from one point of departure, but is nevertheless convinced of the union of all things, of totality, to such an extent that he suffers from dissonances to the point of self-dissolution..."

Which, oddly, I do find inspiring, in that it undercuts the cult of personality and ego while at the same time heightening a complex interest in the whole wide world.

Dada's often portrayed as a thoughtless prankster type of nihilistic art, but I think it is much more a forceful getting back to essentials, to a purer source of creativity that is actually life-affirming, however culturally destructive it must necessarily be at times.
