Fine art, photography and influence in dadaism

' Photography has played a controversial but an important role in the arts for the last 150 years'. The question is still debated whether photography is an art or a form of documentation seen by the eye instead of the mind. Since its beginnings, photography, as an art form has been questioned the view is that photography is not an art, but a form of mechanical reproduction, it was slandered as being more technological than creative. Dadaists, in contrast, embraced photography, enjoying its modern means of creation. Their experiments with the medium include use of double exposures, radical perspective, and unconventional subjects. Dadaists also experimented with photogram's, camera-less photographic prints that record the placement of objects on photosensitive paper that has been exposed to light; these are among some of the earliest abstract photographs.

The Dadaists were the first artists to abandon conventional materials and techniques. Raoul Haussmann, John Heartfield, and Hannah Hoch invented photo-montage a collage of separate photographs that is re-photographed so that the final image is converted back into a seamless photographic print. The original aim of the Movement was far removed from the world of art, and was primarily political in nature. To its supporters Dada was not art, it was anti art, and for everything art stood for dada was to represent the opposite they wanted to affect all aspects of Western civilization, to take part in the revolutionary changes which were the inevitable result of the chaos of the First World War

They were not interested in painting pictures which the public would admire in an detached manner, they wanted to provoke the public into reacting to their activities. To the Dadaists, a violently negative reaction was better than

a passive acceptance. The artwork consisted of photomontages paintings, advertisements, collages, poetry, essays, leaflets and combinations of multiple art forms." Dada influenced almost every artistic principle of our time". Protests in the US during the 1960s copied those of the Dadaists during and after the World Wars. Dada artists developed new techniques of collage and montage and pioneered the use of materials such as newspaper clippings and postcards in their works. A weaving together of photographs and paper to create a new artistic image

The main representatives of Dadaism were Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Hugo ball, Francis Picabia, Max Ernst, Raoul Haussmann, Man Ray, John Heartfield Marcel Janco, Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Hoch, Sophie Taeuber Arp.

Max Ernst born in Germany, 1891-1976 enrolled at Bonn University in 1909 and studied philosophy, art history, literature, psychology and psychiatry. In 1914 he met Hans Arp a founder member of Dada in Cologne. The two soon became friends and their friendship lasted for fifty years. With the outburst of the First World War Ernst was conscripted to the army,, He fought in France and Poland, in his autobiography he referred to his time in the army " On the first of August 1914 Max Ernst died. He was resurrected on the eleventh of November 1918'which suggests to me, that a part of himself died when he enlisted in the war, which started on Aug 1st and that the day the war ended 11th Nov he felt he'd come alive again . His artwork reflected his experiences in battle using military photographs as source material for photomontages and considering he studied psychology and art history in University , violence and brutality were probably no reflection of the man he was.

Pasting together images of planes or bombs with humans,' Collage is the exploitation of the chance meeting of two distant realities on an unfamiliar plane…" -Max Ernst, 1919

The Punching Ball or the Immortality of Buonarroti 1920 Self Portrait Photomontage, gouache, and ink on photograph

' Painting is not for me either decorative amusement, or the plastic invention of felt reality; it must be every time: invention, discovery, revelation.' Max Ernst.

Man Ray born Emmanuel Radnitzky1890-1976 an American photographer and painter raised in New York Beginning as a commercial artist in New York, he taught himself photography to reproduce his paintings and mixed media. Man Ray, was the Dadaist most committed to photography, he abandoned painting altogether, and dedicated his art making after 1918 to film and photography. He had his first solo show of paintings and drawings in 1915. His first Dada-style work, an assemblage he called " Self-Portrait", was shown in 1916. After meeting Marcel Duchamp, he founded the American branch of the Dada movement. The New York Dadaist's tended to be more optimistic than their European counterparts.

Dadaist ideas were not really accepted by New Yorkers and Man Ray left America to live and work in Paris in 1921, he set up a photography studio and began making photogram's, which he called " Rayographs." These " Rayographs" summarise the essence of Dadaism and Surrealism. His experiments with photography included rediscovering how to make " camera less" pictures. He made them by placing objects directly on light-sensitive

paper, which he exposed to light and developed them In Paris he created one of his best known Dadaist artworks: " Indestructible Object" (1923), a metronome with a photo of an eye attached to its clicking arm. artists such as James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Jean Cocteau posed for Man Ray's camera. When Dada dispelled, Ray was already an active Surrealist

' Man Ray's negative portrait of Jacqueline Goddard (1930) initialled by the photographer in pencil, is one of the photographer's many images of women. Printed from an auto chrome, as opposed to a conventional negative, the auto chrome, used in place of a negative during the printing process, yielded a photograph with reversed tones and a diffuse luminosity. Man Ray rotated the picture to 90 degrees, so that Goddard who had been lying down during the sitting, appears in the finished print to float in space with her hair streaming dramatically behind her'

John Heartfield born Helmut Herzfeld 1891 – 1968 was a German photomontagist, draughtsman, typographer and stage designer' John Heartfield and his siblings were abandoned by their parents his mother, a political activist, and his father, a socialist writer had to flee Germany to avoid persecution for their political beliefs. The children were raised by relatives and in institutions From 1907 to 1911 John Heartfield studied art at the Königliche Kunstgewerbeschule in Munich , specializing in poster design. In the summer of 1916, Germany had been using an offensive nationalistic slogan: " Gott Strafe England" or May God Punish England. This angered Helmut who protested by changing his name to John Heartfield.

John Heartfield played a major role in the Dada Movement, he learned techniques and styles from many other artists who expressed their political ideas through art. His experiences in World War I led him to conclude that the only worthy art, was that which took account of social realities. He witnessed a country of hungry, desolate people in the midst of chaos during the Second World War, and through his art, protested their suffering. He took a sarcastic approach, condemning the anti-semite and the wealthy industrialists who supported the German army

Most of his career was spent declaring his opposition to Hitler and the Nazi Regime and he used his art to protest the violent, greedy governmental control of the Nazi party. His politically charged photomontages were banned in his home country during the Nazi regime In 1939 the Arcade Gallery in London showed one of Heartfield's most famous exhibitions, ' One Man's War against Hitler' .

This piece is Hearfield's interpretation of the Nazi military slogan. Blood dripping from the swastika infers that the military (weapons and soldiers) was all Germany needed for victory. Bismarck had stated that the German people would be reformed through a combination of blood and iron. Heartfield's 1934 photomontage shows how this was to be interpreted in reality

In my opinion Dada was a radical art form that challenged Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Dadaists were the first to use photography to create photomontage images which made visible to the world the violence, hypocrisies and chaos of the

war and revolution. They used their art and photography as a weapon to express their political dissatisfaction.

They weaved together in their photomontages and collages, their thoughts and experiences and associations with the environment and culture they witnessed during their lifetime. Dada seem to me to have been a group of people who stood up an fought back against dictatorship and oppression.

' While the thunder of guns rolled in the distance, we sang, painted, glued and composed for all our worth. We are seeking an art that would heal mankind from the madness of the age.' Jean Arp

The photomontage images were created by taking multiple negatives of photos and stacking them together to create a new photo or picture. It is two dimensional with, no perspective or unified point of view. Modern technology today gives us Photoshop and other creative software to create photomontage images, layering and merging photographs together to create new images.