

Dada

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In the early 1900s an anti-war theme in art began to gain popularity. Artists used various types of art to create shocking and provocative material in order to express their opinions. This type of art was called Dada. This lesson covers:

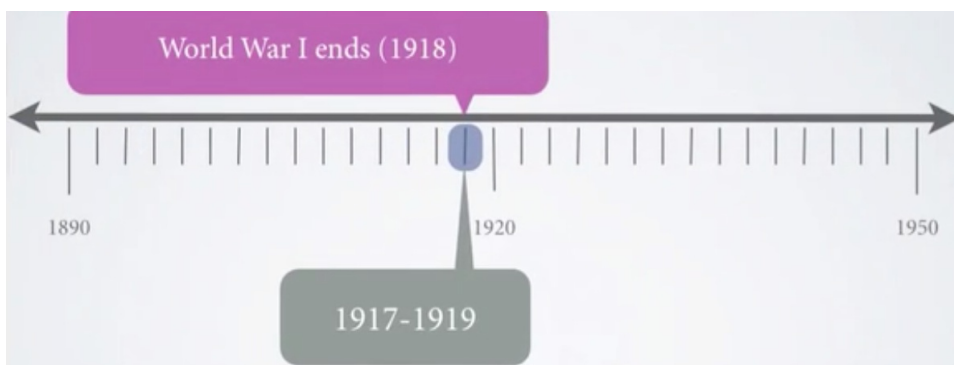


BIG IDEA

Dada began in Zurich, Switzerland, a neutral country during World War I, among a group of artists and poets who were living there in order to protest the war and/or avoid being drafted.

1. Period and Location: Dada

The artwork in this lesson is from the years 1917 to 1919 in Zurich, Switzerland, highlighted in the timeline below. Switzerland is where the Dada movement developed in 1916.



2. Dada

One of the interesting things about **Dada** is that it was not so much an artistic style as an artistic philosophy. The overarching theme of this form of artwork was very much anti-war. Artists used **collage**, **assemblage** art, **photomontage**, and **readymade** to create shocking and provocative material that grabbed the attention of their audience.

One of the goals of artists that engaged in Dada was to essentially create an awareness of their position. The bourgeoisie was a particular target of Dada artists, who protested against bourgeois ideals and felt that the bourgeoisie was so apathetic that they would rather fight a war than change their ways.



THINK ABOUT IT

In a nutshell, Dada is anti-war and protests against bourgeois ideals. It includes nonsensical readings and performances and creates shocking, absurd material.



TERMS TO KNOW

Dada

A 20th-century European avant-garde art movement characterized by performances and anti-war themes.

Collage

A French word meaning “a pasting”, it is artwork created by using the technique of layering unrelated scraps or fragments into a composition.

Assemblage

The technique of making art using three- and two-dimensional objects in one composition.

Photomontage

A technique used to create a composite photograph by cutting and pasting photographs to create one seamless photographic print.

Readymade

To assemble unaltered found objects into a composition.

2a. “Karawane”

There were also many authors and poets within the Dada movement. In fact, the Dada movement's impetus is often credited to the poet Hugo Ball. After moving to neutral Switzerland, Ball established a cabaret called the Cabaret Voltaire. Many other artists that fled to Switzerland in opposition to the war and to avoid being drafted congregated at the Cabaret Voltaire.

Hugo Ball's reading of his poem “Karawane,” below, sparked the Dada movement.

KARAWANE

jolifanto bambla ô falli bambla

grossiga m'pfa habla horem

égiga goramen

higo bloiko russula huju

hollaka hollala

anlogo bung

blago bung

blago bung

bosso fataka

ü üü ü

schampa wulla wussa ólobo

hej tatta gôrem

eschige zunbada

wulubu ssubudu uluw ssubudu

tumba ba- umf

kusagauma

ba - umf

Karawane by Hugo Ball

1917

Poem reading at the Cabaret Voltaire

It was a performance reading in which he dressed up in a cardboard outfit, complete with lobster-like hands, a witch doctor's hat, and cape. The poem itself was essentially nonsensical babble, which may have inspired the name "Dada," which is "baby talk" in German. Dada questioned the idea of art itself in response to the reality of the war and the moral and ethical questions it raised.

2b. "Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance"

In response to the unimaginable death toll and what was considered the utter waste of human life in the trenches, Dada artists, such as Jean Arp, explored the aesthetic of garbage. This was done with little bits of paper and discarded items using collage and assemblage art.

Arp's "Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance" is an example of this aesthetic exploration.



Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance by Jean Arp

1917

Collage

For artists such as Arp, who helped found the Dada movement, randomness was a way of removing the personalization and control over art that had existed up until this time. This possibly influenced later artists such as Jackson Pollock, who explored similar themes.

2c. “Cut with the Dada Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany”

Dada eventually spread to Berlin, Germany, where artists such as Hannah Höch, George Grosz, and John Heartfield used photomontage and other techniques to create works of art that function as political satire.



DID YOU KNOW

Hannah Höch is one of the first important feminists to emerge in 20th-century art and one of the pioneers of the photomontage art form.

This next image of Höch's artwork is an example of political satire.



Fountain by Marcel Duchamp

1917

Porcelain and enamel paint



THINK ABOUT IT

You might be asking yourself, “How is this art?” This is an important question, and it is one that Duchamp was asking himself as he created this piece, along with the question, “What is the essence of artwork?” You might have seen Duchamp’s work before, and not just in the public restroom. His painting of the “Mona Lisa” with a mustache has become iconic. But it’s important to look beyond the obvious and ask yourself, what is he trying to say?

There are many interpretations. Connecting it to the art of the time, it’s been suggested that Duchamp was making a commentary on the use of readymade. Or, possibly, he was bypassing traditional craft employed by modern artists. He’s exploring the threshold that marks the shift between a simple object and art by using an extreme and debased example.



DID YOU KNOW

What’s funny is that he submitted the work of art to the Society of Independent Arts, quite sure that it would be rejected. If was, of course. It is the first example of conceptual art in which the idea behind the work of art is more important than the aesthetic itself.



SUMMARY

Artists in the early 1900s used various types of art to create shocking artwork in order to express their anti-war opinions. In this lesson, you learned about the **period and location of Dada**.

Remember, **Dada** is a 20th-century European avant-garde art movement. Performances and anti-war themes were what characterized this movement.

You explored examples of Dada including:

- **“Karawane”**—A nonsensical performance reading by Hugo Ball
- **“Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance”**—Jean Arp’s collage of garbage
- **“Cut with the Dada Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany”**—Hannah Höch’s photomontage of political satire
- **“Fountain”**—Marcel Duchamp’s example of readymade art, a urinal

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR IAN MCCONNELL.



TERMS TO KNOW

Assemblage

The technique of making art using three and two-dimensional objects in one composition.

Collage

A French word meaning "a pasting", it is artwork created by using the technique of layering unrelated scraps or fragments into a composition.

Dada

A 20th-century European avant-garde art movement characterized by performances and anti-war themes.

Photomontage

A technique used to create a composite photograph by cutting and pasting photographs to create on seamless photographic print.

Readymade

To assemble unaltered found objects into a composition.