

Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



MAN RAY (1890 - 1976)

Cadeau

Iron and brass nails

6 1/2 x 4 x 3 1/4 in (16.5 x 10.1 x 8.2 cm)

1974 (1921)

Signed, titled and numbered 3272/5000
Accompanied by signed and numbered card, in original packing

Publisher: Luciano Anselmino, Turin

PROVENANCE

Private Collection

EXHIBITED

Disruptive selection, Fall 2019, Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles
Assisted Readymade, Winter 2022, The Lone Star Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Dallas

NOTES

Cadeau, editioned replica 1974, or 'Gift', is one of the famous icons of the surrealist movement. It consists of an everyday continental flat iron of the sort that had to be heated on a stove, transformed here into a non-functional, disturbing object by the addition of a single row of fourteen nails. The transformation of an item of ordinary domestic life into a strange, un-nameable object with sadistic connotations exemplified the power of the object within dada and surrealism to escape the rule of logic and the conventional identification of words and objects. Man Ray once said, 'There are objects that need names.'

In his autobiography Man Ray recounted the story of the making of the original Cadeau. On the day of the opening of his first solo exhibition in Paris he had a drink with the composer Erik Satie and on leaving the café saw a hardware store. There with Satie's help - Man Ray spoke only poor French at this point - he bought the iron, some glue and some nails, and went to the gallery where he made the object on the spot. He intended his friends to draw lots for the work, called 'Cadeau', but the piece was stolen during the course of the afternoon.

Arturo Schwarz, Man Ray's dealer and author of a monograph on him, has written of this piece:

Cadeau is a typical product of Man Ray's double-edged humour. Its sadistic implications need not be stressed. Its erotic aspect is revealed by Man Ray's remark: 'You can tear a dress to ribbons with it. I did it once, and asked a beautiful eighteen-year-old coloured girl to wear as it as she danced. Her body showed through as she moved around, it was like a bronze in movement. It was really beautiful.'

Man Ray's intentions, which might be seen as merely to deride the iron's functions are much more subtle. Man Ray never destroys, he always modifies and enriches. In this case, he provides the flatiron with a new role, a role that we dimly guess, and this probably accounts for the object's strange fascination.

(Schwarz, p.208)

