



# Understanding the Grammar of Protest and Subversion through the lens of Dadaism

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**Abstract**— *Background: Dadaism was a political art movement which developed during the first world war, lasting from 1916 to 1924. The movement's first centre was in Zurich, Switzerland, when later other establishments came up in Berlin, Paris, London and New York. The movement adopted a philosophy of nonsense, rejection of meaning and protest against the war, which was expressed through mediums like performance art, filmmaking, and poetry. Objective: To analyse the methods by which Dadaism was able to question the established practices of art making and the acceptance of political actions and war. To understand the different parts of Dadaism, and the extent to which they were successfully able to do the aforementioned. Methodology: This essay uses critical theories about culture, art, and politics, and analyses different forms of art making equipped by Dadaism through their lens. The methodology used for this essay is a combination of secondary literature review and critical data analysis.*



**Keywords**— *Art, Dadaism, Europe, Politics, Protest.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Dadaism was an avant-garde political art movement born as a response to the first world war. It lasted from 1916 to 1924. Its first centre appeared in Zurich, Switzerland; the country's neutral nature caused it to become the place various artists sought refuge from the war and possibility of being drafted. Other centres of Dadaism developed around the early 20th century in New York, Berlin and Paris too.

It challenged the treachery of the war, and was a proponent in changing the perceptions of the purpose of art along with the Italian futurists, cubists, and expressionists. Dada artists were not just painters but also included photographers, dancers, poets and musicians. They used scientific ideas, seen in Marcel Duchamp's *The bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even* and employed new techniques of creation like photomontage, by photographers like Man Ray and mixed medium painting by Otto Dix and Hannah Hoch. This made it new and explicitly challenging as critique to the politics of war and modern capitalism. Dadaists adopted a philosophy of nonsense and chance as a rejection of logic and reasoning, contributing to the literature of nonsense in the form of Dadaist poetry, by

poets like Tzara, and mechanical noise music, like George Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique*.

The term "Dada" itself has been supposed to have originated from a colloquial French for "hobby horse", with the poet Richard Huelsenbeck of the Dada movement in Zurich recalling it having been picked out from the pages of a French encyclopaedia, but has meanings in German ("there, there") and Romanian ("yes, yes"). The word also universally evokes the incomprehensible sounds made by a baby. Essentially, "Dada" can be considered meaningless, having more sonic than linguistic emphasis. This establishes that the movement's foundation itself had a central theme of nonsense as rejection- something that had not up till then been so highlighted in an artistic campaign.

Therefore, it becomes important to examine, through both political and artistic lenses, the power that Dada held and how it subverted the dominant understanding of art and politics in European Nations.

## II. HYPOTHESIS

Dadaism was able to deconstruct the dominant understanding of what was perceived as art and therefore broaden its definition to a considerable extent. However, it could not as successfully use this deconstruction to challenge the established political narratives in European countries during the First world war.

## III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first world war took place in a rapidly changing artistic climate. The Impressionists<sup>1</sup> had mostly dismantled by the beginning of the 20th century, only the remnants of Post-Impressionism<sup>2</sup> remained, while movements like Cubism<sup>3</sup> and Expressionism<sup>4</sup> were gaining traction. Cubism focused on geometric shapes and non-representationally representing objects. Visual motifs of the movement consisted of disfigured bodies and landscapes; specifically, a new representation of the nude body, as seen by Pablo Picasso's controversial *Les Femmes d'Alger*. Picasso and Braque also began experimenting with collaging techniques within their works later in 1912 and developed compositions through papier collé. This can be seen in Georges Braque's *Bottle of Rum* of 1914. Expressionism became a manifestation of artists' tendency to return to emotion and nature, distorting colours and compositions of the visual realities around them to express internal feeling and visions. They also used printmaking, as technological advancement made mass distribution possible when the war approached, to express their socio-political ideas, critiques and gain a larger audience for their work. Initially, artists of this movement like Max Beckmann and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner volunteered in the war, and the atrocities they saw led them to create anti-war works like *The Night* by Beckmann and the *Wartime Apocalypse* series of cigarette packet miniatures by Ludwig.

The governments of many countries like Russia, Germany, France and Britain also used lithograph prints to garner funding for the war effort and document their own technological advancements to maintain optimism during the war. Pro-war propaganda posters used primary colours and black outlines in a recognisably illustrative style, or a photographic collage style with bold typography, with slogans like "Remember Belgium and Northern France-Buy Nothing from the Germans" in France, "Help us win--buy war bonds!" in Germany, "Britons: Lord Kitchener Wants You" in Britain, and "Everything for Victory! Sign up for the 5 1/2% War Loan" in Russia. This was done in an effort to make them easily replicable and ready for mass distribution, but also stand out. Nationalism dominated the public feeling playing a role in the outbreak of the war. It also strengthened the beginning of the war when people saw it as a noble effort to defend their nation.

In Germany, the war was initially viewed as imperative for Germany's colonial expansion. The widespread public narrative became that Germany was an underdog in the face of Russia, Britain and France who were collating against it and heavily investing in arms. In Britain, public opinion and the cabinet were originally divided regarding British intervention in the war since there were a myriad of problems nationally with Irish demonstrations for Home Rule and the Suffragettes. Even after the July crisis<sup>5</sup>, there were large anti-war demonstrations like the one in Trafalgar Square in London. But after the German invasion of Belgium, a majority of the British cabinet and public was in favour of entering the war, with people voting for war credits. Middle class men volunteered to serve in the war without conscription; for the first 2 years Britain did not have to conscript. In France, after the German invasion of Belgium, war was understood as a necessity. Usually, to get support for the war, the government incited nationalist sentiments and relied on the shared history of conflict

<sup>1</sup> Impressionism, an art movement having roots in 1860s France, lasted until around the 1880s and involved the use of visible brushstrokes to capture a suggestion of the subject and its interaction with light, rather than the accurate replication of the subject. It has been considered the groundwork for many modern art movements due to its emancipation with institutions of academic painting and traditional ideals.

<sup>2</sup> Post Impressionism refers to the movement that emerged in the late 1880s as a reaction to the Impressionist art movement. The Post-Impressionists were concerned with rejecting the Impressionistic focus on depicting naturalistic light and colour, and instead focused on the emotional and symbolic representation of the aforementioned.

<sup>3</sup> Cubism was a European art movement originating in 1907, retaining momentum till the early 1920s that has been considered the invention of artists Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. It may be distinguished by its representing a subject from multiple

perspectives to create one image, often containing fragmented geometric lines and shape.

<sup>4</sup> Expressionism was an art movement that emerged in parts of Europe in 1905, holding prominence till the late 1920s. It was primarily concerned with subverting objective representation of one's surroundings, instead placing emphasis on the emotional response. The aesthetics of Expressionist art are largely characterised by the use of dramatisation of the basic elements and representation of personal, sometimes dark or gory, subject matter.

<sup>5</sup> The July Crisis refers to the period between June 28th and August 6th in 1914 which preceded the outbreak of the First World War. Its start was marked by the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand and involved political tensions increasing between European countries.

between these countries, as evident in the aforementioned slogan.

However as the war progressed, there was growing disillusionment among the public and artists. Economic problems of income inequality and inflation worsened during the course of the war and artists; even those who had previously supported it, were now revolted by what they saw in the war. The ones who did not enlist were not removed from its effects when several of their friends and colleagues died on the field.

One of these instances was the death of Hans Leybold. Hugo Ball and himself had published the first issue of a controversial, and heavily censored, avant-garde left-wing magazine named *Revolution* in Munich, 1913, with more issues to follow the next year. After this, Leybold died in the battle in Belgium. Artists even tried to escape by forging passports, feigning medical illnesses and fleeing to neutral countries like Switzerland. Ball and Emily Hennings left for Switzerland in 1915 after he witnessed scenes of battle in Belgium in 1914. His anti-war sentiments deepened through the year as he participated in the anarchist political philosophies of Kropotkin<sup>6</sup> and Bakunin<sup>7</sup>. The pair lived in poverty under pseudonyms until the opening of Cabaret Voltaire.

Here artists collected from Germany, France and Great Britain. Experiencing a collective awakening against the war, influenced by anarchist ideas and a want to reject the manufactured logic of the political landscape, the Dada movement was born.

Dadaism's embrace of nonsensicality made it a subversive response to the horrors of conflict (in this case the First World War) and enabled it to question both the purpose of art and its place in politics. The Abstractionists<sup>8</sup> tendency to work with different forms of creation like music was promoted by Dadaism with their performances and soirees at Cabaret Voltaire. Particularly, the work of Kandinsky<sup>9</sup> informed the geometric shapes of Hans Arp, the compositional techniques of Hugo Ball and the cluttered graphic collaging of Hannah Hoch. The Expressionists of 1912 redefined the role of art from an aesthetic means of personal expression to a tool for critical proclamation. The

Futurist<sup>10</sup> movement of 1909 lent Dada the manifesto, and the concept of noise music.

For the purpose of this essay, political protest is defined as an attempt to alter the influences of one's surroundings. We can consider that the political is institutionally powerful, meaning, its definition extends from just the government to other institutions of power, like the church, school, prisons, hospitals etc., too. This is because they have the ability to enforce rules of how to behave and what is desirable, which they enforce through multiple channels. Political art then becomes anything that either upholds the state through its institutions of civil society and their ideologies, or undermines the aforementioned through creating a counter narrative. Facets of political art movements may be conducive to this effort and allow the movement to achieve a destabilisation of civil institutions and their intellectuals.

## IV. SUCCESSES

### 4.1 Performance Art

Dadaism created new channels for expression by redefining performance art. Previously performance was generally viewed as something meant for visual pleasure and mythical storytelling more than representation of artistic emotion. It was a part of European high society, as seen in activities like going to the opera and to the ballet. Performance had never previously been the centrality of a political art movement. Even while there were individual efforts in the past by performers and one-off theatre performances, like Ball's own published play *Die Nase des Michelangelo*, the predominant narrative was one constructed by repertoires of the ballet, and the traditional compositions of music and song. The Futurists had previously experimented with unconventional theatre, like their 1913 performance in Italy, where the performers insulted the audience to receive verbal assaults; an incident later called a success by the Futurist newspaper *Lacerba*. It was one of the first attempts to reconstruct the role of a performer to a provocateur; someone can use the audience as part of the performance. Dadaism is where these ideas flourished. Cabaret Voltaire became a place where artists of all different facets could

<sup>6</sup> Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin [1842 to 1921], was a geographer, Russian political philosopher and anarchist communist. He is often credited with the theory of Mutual Aid within anarchism.

<sup>7</sup> Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin [1814 to 1876], was a Russian revolutionary anarchist, also remembered as a rival of Marxism.

<sup>8</sup> With origins in the late 19th century, Abstractionism revolved around the concept of extrapolating compositions focusing on the principles of art, like colour line and form, from the obvious visual realities present in the world. Today, it is understood as a general term for art that is not strictly representational.

<sup>9</sup> Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was a Russian painter and theorist, who is heralded as a pioneer of abstraction in Western art.

<sup>10</sup> Futurism was an Italian art movement that originated in 1909 and remained prominent until the early 1920s. The movement was based in a representation of speed, technology and the future of the modern world its artists occupied, and can be characterised by a strong rejection of all past methods of creation in the country.

present poetry, music and theatre, the common thread uniting them being their anti-war sentiments.

Often, their dances were spontaneous, playing off of the energies of each other and the costumes, which were designed to invoke the specific emotion of the performance. This became a method by which the Dadaists could dedicate themselves to connecting with their spiritual understanding of a work and react to it in the moment, which humanised the performers, making the aura that emanated from their pieces stronger.

However, they did not forgo the exhibitionist part of art creation, by conceiving elements of their artwork designed to be visually shocking. An example of this is Dada masks. Designed by Hans Arp and Georges Janco, they were made from cardboard, horse hair, cloth and wire, often painted with red, Arp comparing the paint to blood. Often the nature of the mask influenced the movements of the performer, and made them invent dances. Dances named *Flycatching*, *Cauchemar* and *Festive Desperation* have been recalled in Arp's accounts and Tzara's *Zurich Chronicle*, their movements being visceral, drawing from the emotions of the performers and Janco's masks. They were provocative, drawing inspiration from Japanese and African masks but coupling them with representations of violence and blood. This crucially laid the foundation for modern performance art and the use of costume as a part of the act, as well as using the visually significant elements of their performances as a tool to highlight their intentions but have them reacted to by audiences.

Dada performers were also wildly efficient in adapting their interpretations to their own perceptions because of their freeform way of performance. They were actively interpreting, interacting with, and configuring the new sonic and visual information they received while on stage, which was crucially different to the rigid, rehearsed and singular performances of traditional soirees. Thereby, they built upon the theoretical observations of Raymond Williams<sup>11</sup>, which discuss how culture is established by a community of process wherein the interpretations of people form patterns or communications, and the ones that are socially available come to determine the inhabitable structures of our lives. Performers were able to shift these structures insofar as they made new patterns of interpretation socially available through letting the music guide them. They were not only radical in their content, but

also in their approach to deliver it, which differentiated them further from the complacent mainstream performance politics of the time. It made the information they communicated much more difficult to control, because its interpretation required a shift in the ways people thought about what performances can say.

This was then not separate from the other forms of art making they explored like collaging, painting and photography but was a major part of the movement. Even in the interior of Cabaret Voltaire, paintings of artists like Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky and Klee were hung. This distinction was what became the delta between successful and unsuccessful attempts to integrate the physical intimacy of performance art into the context of traditional methods of art making like painting, because they made it a central process of art making.

#### 4.2 Poetry and Music

Influenced by absurdist pieces like Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu*<sup>12</sup> and the Futurists, they looked at how to shock, confuse, and offend audiences. This manifested in the inclusion of nonsense words, convoluted dances, and unconventional sounds in their performances. Ball constructed noise concerts, using instruments like bells, babies' rattles, cowbells, and shawms, as soundtracks to poetry readings, in which purposeless words were coupled with implicitly political phrases.

This rejection of the purpose of language shows rejection of complacency. The purpose of language is communication, it relies on a common understanding of both the speaker and the listener. Dada poetry did not uphold this, they used incomprehensible words, more akin to sound than communicable thought, like Hugo Ball's poem *gadji beri bimba*, all of which is constituted of entirely onomatopoeic phrases. This rejected the idea that what they had to say was contingent on its reception, bound to the explicable and facial realities they saw. This distortion of language, deemed necessary by Tzara to find new meanings, is what let Dadaism penetrate at the basis where we find our understanding of the world and connectivity on: language. Another utility of this poetry may be alluding to the mechanised killing of the war. The removal of the communicative ability of words mirrored the removal of human connection in the war. World War One had caused the Dadaists a loss of meaning in the way they interpreted the world, showing how deeply they despised it and its penetrative effect on their psyche. This

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Henry Williams [1921 to 1988], was a Welsh critic, intellectual and writer, largely influential in the New Left movement. His studies explored the relationship between culture and society, and he contributed to the development of alternative Marxist approaches.

<sup>12</sup> *King Ubu*, or *Ubu Roi*, is a play by Alfred Jarry, a French playwright. Considered a landmark for avant-garde theatre and the absurdist movement because of its subversion of the medium, the play centres around a power struggle between Pere Ubu, the protagonist, and the King of Poland.



understanding of war was mirrored in the ways they depicted the world, through their characterisation of it as “nonsense”.

The compositional cacophony of Dada’s orchestra pieces was another parallel to the sounds of war. Specifically, George Antheil’s score *Ballet Mecanique*, originally for Fernand Léger’s film of the same name, captured the anxiety of the battlefield, with its disjointed rhythmic instrumentals, repeating notes, sporadic bass drum and scattered rapidity. The use of instruments like the xylophones and electric bells create the fast tempo, and the 16 pianos, sectionally synchronised, permeate a sense of fragmentation throughout the composition. These instruments imbibe a fretful anxiety, and attack the sonic sense of the listener by making it difficult to keep pace with the music. It is a clear comparison to the rapid, raging and loud noises of guns and tanks firing, men running about with their weapons gear about them, and airships buzzing above, even brought into the track through Antheil’s use of propeller fans. Most distinct among these is the periodic bass drum, unexpected and commanding, like a bomb being dropped.

First presented in Paris, 1926, the concert caused enrage from the audience, which was drowned by the music. This made accessible a kind of representation of the war that people were previously removed from, in an orchestra hall, they were engulfed by the score, like a soldier on the battlefield. The musical exploration of the movement therefore, was able to emotionalise the war for a broader number of people, usually consumers, both intellectual and otherwise, from the upper echelons of society, which subverted the narratives of battlefield glory by making its realities more proximate.

### 4.3 Film

Another tool of the Dadaists was the camera. They used film, and the impersonal nature of it to do what the theatre could not. Analysed through the lens of Walter Benjamin’s *The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction*<sup>13</sup>, the film was different from the stage performance in two ways; the camera distorted reality by picking the angles, frames and sequences in which the audience is shown images, and by the destruction of the aura of the performer. The second reason was that because the actor was treated like a prop insofar as the cameraman chose what to show, and he had no presence because his performance was just documented by a camera lens and an edited replica of it was seen by the public. It also took place because instead of an

actor giving a singular performance, he presented a sequence of smaller shots, meaning that he couldn’t realise himself into that role fully, and was always conscious that it is an image of himself which will permeate to the public.

The Dadaists leaned into these shortfalls of film, and used it to their advantage. As an example, Fernand Léger’s experimental film *Ballet Mecanique* uses a sequence of fast moving, seemingly unrelated images; a woman’s lips, an oscillating metal sphere, a woman on a swing, and kaleidoscopic shots of unidentifiable objects. The objectification of the actor was exemplified by closing up onto specific parts of their face, which used their body as nothing more than an image, specifically visible in the singular loop of a woman’s mouth breaking into a smile, and one of a singular eye opening and shutting, which re-occur throughout the film. This is crucially something that the theatre could not have done, the segmentation of the human body into its constituents created a vision not possible through just acting in front of an audience. Thus, the use of the camera allowed the Dadaists to both penetrate and objectify the human, which allowed it to present the body in revealing and subversive ways, by destroying the distance one keeps from it and its resultant aura.

The camera’s distortion of reality is evident throughout the film, in its unconventional angles and experimentation with the lens. The tool itself is able to penetrate the realities in a way that the eyes cannot, according to Benjamin, while the film makes use of several top, and upside down shots. This confronts the viewer with new representations of the visions around them, questioning the complacency of a singular stagnant perspective within the stage performance. Léger intentionally created undistinguishable fast moving frames to introduce his vision of the rapidity of technological and social advancements. Dada films like *Ballet Mecanique* act as a predecessor to modern techniques of editing and photo manipulation, and their confrontational nature was caused by this experimentation.

## V. FAILURES

Conceptually, while Dadaism brought innovative techniques to art making, certain limitations also hindered its success as a political art movement.

### 5.1 Political Context

Viewing the movement through a Gramscian<sup>14</sup> lens, it can be seen as an attempted attack towards the bourgeois

<sup>13</sup> “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” is an essay by Walter Benjamin, a German-Jewish critic and philosopher, which was published in 1936. The essay involves observations on the changes in art making and consumption

practices due to the advent of technologies that allowed reproduction of artwork.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Francesco Gramsci, [1891-1937] was a Marxist philosopher, politician and writer, in Italy. Known for his

intellectual and moral rule under capitalism due to its subversion from their orthodox notions of how to make and interact with art. Being an art movement, it is given that challenging the substructural capitalist economic model, which perpetuates bourgeois authority, is beyond the scope of its goal. However, Gramsci recognises that this class rule is beyond just economic and extends into moral and intellectual leadership within the superstructure. For the continuous imposition of the bourgeoisie hegemony, the superstructure must be in symbiosis with the economic base. Thus, it becomes important to study this phenomenon, and conditions of its failure, to understand how Dadaism could not successfully establish itself into a counter-hegemonic stance to the state.

The superstructure within capitalism is made up of multiple different pillars of civil society that work as extensions of the direct authority of the state. While the state is concerned with creating optimal conditions of compromise between the dominant and submissive class both politically and economically, other institutions of culture, academia and religion also play a role in the superstructural formation. They aid in both the perpetuation of bourgeois ideology, many being funded directly by them like churches, schools, and museums, and act as a method for ensuring consensual participation of the individuals of the proletariat in the capitalist system through systems like trade unions. So, bourgeois hegemony is not the work of a single body, but a pluralist rule.

Thus, it follows that economic crises, like war, could crucially become situations of failing hegemony only when the substructure is also affected. It is indicated through a political failing, by the working class revoking consent to be subjugated, and ideological failing, where the masses no longer buy into the traditions of any civil structures. The masses begin taking a more active stance rather than a passive one, and strive towards changing the status quo. This does not necessarily have to manifest in a socialist revolution, but any sort of change or diminishing unto the bourgeois historical bloc requires a challenge from an alternative proletariat historical bloc. So, to establish a successful counter hegemonic campaign while still under capitalist constraints, Gramsci believes that first a construction of a proletarian bloc is required. This is achieved not by directly attacking the bourgeois, a strategy dubbed a “war of movement”, since the Western bourgeoisie controls civil structures too, but by aligning with other dominant anti capitalist forces that exist already

and then building the narrative until there is an opportunity to strike. This is where Dadaism fell short. Two main characteristics hindered its attempts- economic inaccessibility, non-pluralist approach.

## 5.2 Economic Inaccessibility

While the Dada supposedly represented an organic rejection of intellectualism and dominant anti-war sentiments of the working class, it was not highly accessible to the ones it was meant to represent. While the Cabaret Voltaire was open to artists and creatives, and Dadaists attempted to make their art publicly available through publishing books like the “Collection Dada” and poetry collections, the movement’s development was not done keeping access in mind. The Gallerie Dada, which opened in March 1917, despite having visits from local visitors, charged high admission fees and became a place to host parties and serve tea to elites. Because of the fact that the movement did not actively attempt to make its work available to the public, it could not reach the people most directly represented by its message, which made its public reach numerically limited and hindered it from becoming truly representative of the people. It could not garner enough support from existing resistance to then assimilate into the anti-capitalist narrative. Instead of being a torchbearer, or a public’s institution, its centre became business. This meant it had a stake in the capitalist system and actively profited from either richer members of the working class- who still consented to state authority in present form, or the bourgeoisie. It could not truly separate itself from the system enough.

## 5.3 Non-Pluralist Approach

The Dada did not, by choice or chance, align with the other dominant artistic movements and popular anti-capitalist forces in the time. Logistically, its biggest centre was in Zurich, away from the popular anti-war and anti-government movements taking place within Britain, France and Germany, given that most working class individuals were either conscripted or did not have enough funds to leave the country, unlike Dada artists. This, along with the internal disagreements between artists like Hugo Ball and Tzara about the goals of the Dada itself, meant that it was not able to contribute to the effort of dismantling the class power disparity it was so critical of. This is particularly vital for a political art movement, and can be the delta between it being successful or unsuccessful in its goals. For example, the Russian Constructivist<sup>15</sup> movement of 1915 became the

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contribution to the development of the concept of hegemony, most notably through his *Prison Notebooks*, he was also a founder of the Italian Communist Party.

<sup>15</sup> The Russian Constructivist movement gained prominence in 1915, retaining it till around 1945, and was based on the principle

that art was more than just personal, and should be used as a tool for critique and propaganda, viewing it through a utilitarian perspective. Exploring construction, architecture and cinema, the movement can be recognised by a use of sharp clean lines,

official face for the propaganda and publication of the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>16</sup> It inculcated the physical recognisability of the movement's art and architecture into the Bolshevik vision for the new socialist order and in doing so was able to become a part of the proletariat historical bloc. Thus, the Dada's inability to adopt a pluralist approach in its protest contributed to its non-fulfillment.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Because of geographic concentration within Zurich and other small working areas, and numerous disagreements between artists of the movement it dwindled from prominence within about 6 years of its conception. Because of its unstructured isolation it remained a statement, albeit powerful, instead of a force within a revolution. The inventive techniques it adopted through use of new and old tools of creation did not make their way to the masses, and therefore could not become an instrument of mobilisation only remaining provocations. It was ephemeral, declining as the First World War, the catalyst of its creation, came to an end too. However, Dada was unique in its explicit collectivisation and structure, having identifiable centres, events and manifestos. Its vocal nature made it provocative to the bourgeois masses and it broadened the definition of art through its integration of performance and the use of film. Dadaism's adoption of the philosophy of nonsense, which permeated through the noise music, soundscapes and gory costuming allowed it to devise a kind of artistic response which did not exist before it. Dadaism presented how art could do more than just mirror what was around it, by making the audience a part of the piece itself and attacking more than just their visual sense alone. The Dadaists' use of film helped them destroy the distant, complacent view by which the eye was meant to see by using the camera, poking and inspecting the realities around them to show what lay under the visually cohesive and unoffending. The anarchist approach they took to creation allowed them to radically interrogate cultural structures of power that perpetuated the war, and reveal the hypocrisies they thought lied within them. They changed the process of art making, and its possible outcomes to veer it towards being socially and politically influential.

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geometric shapes and practical instruments without a strict focus on traditional composition.

<sup>16</sup> The Bolshevik Revolution, more widely known as the Russian Revolution, was a series of events in Russia in 1917 that involved

the downfall of its monarchy. The Tsar's rule was replaced by a new socialist order, led by the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin.