Student name: Group:

Art movement.....Dadaism, 20th century
Timeframe.....1912 - 1923
Topic Focus.....The role of chance

Teaching material:

Discussion questions: The instructor will provide video materials for educational purposes. ~15'

Background information: This lesson focuses on the diversity of techniques in Dadaist works. In particular the role of chance in Dadaism. Dada artists were disillusioned by the social values that led to the war, and sought to challenge the accepted, often repressive, conventions of order and logic, shocking people's consciousness. This international network of artists employed unorthodox techniques and materials to create new forms of visual art, performance and poetry, as well as alternative visions of the world.

Pure chance was quite an important part of Dada art, and this reflects some key ideas of the Dadaists about what art is. One of the key tasks of Dadaism was to undermine the foundations of art by eliminating notions of artistic 'talent', studio training and the academic means of making art, i.e. planning and composition, or in other words, thinking itself. Dada artists are known for their use of *readymades*; everyday objects that could be bought and presented as art with little manipulation by the artist. For these artists, art was more conceptual than visual, meaning that the physical appearance of the art was less important than the meaning behind it.

Main activity: Exploring the role of chance in the works of major artists.

The role of chance became a central experience for the Dadaist artist and developed in two different places, in Paris, before the War, when Duchamp attached a bicycle wheel to a stool at random, and in Zurich, when Arp tore up a failed drawing and saw that the pieces of paper had formed a 'composition' of their own accord. Arp's gesture, born, like Duchamp's, out of disgust, is close to the Zurich Dadaists' experiments with the *poème simultané*, a poem written in three or more voices, indicating that a work of art has its own organic destiny. Chance destroys the reassuring notion that cause follows effect and admits anarchy in artistic creation, foregrounding the process. Duchamp, even more than Arp, removes the artist's hand from the process and surrenders completely to chance. He stops making (for a time) and limits himself to "finding" readymade objects, appropriates these non-original artefacts and christens them "readymades". The original meaning or intended use of the bicycle wheel or the stool is disrupted: one knows intellectually what each object "does", but understands that one has created what Duchamp called "a new thought".

Group activity: Compare and contrast "Collage with squares arranged according to the laws of chance", created by Jean, sometimes called Hans, Arp in 1917; with M. Duchamp's readymade "Fountain" (1917).

Related reading: Stephane Mallarmé, a poet, was an important precursor of the role of chance. His famous poem "A stroke of the hand will not make danger disappear", written in 1897 (published in 1914), works with the senses of the reader/viewer on many levels. Another precedent, and a similar mentality was already seen in the concrete poems of Guillaume Apollinaire and in the "words in freedom" (parole in libertà) of Futurist poetry.

1. Notes on the artistic movement of DADAISM. General background

3. Key words on the subject and artists related.

2. Notes on the subject of Chance in the context of Dadaism. Individual activity

4. Summary of group activities. General conclusions.