

N: I have just read this article<sup>1</sup> — and there are many similar others out there— that talks about how Duchamp stole the idea of the readymade from the 20th century Dada artist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (Figure 5). This article argues that Elsa was friends with Duchamp. In referring to the *Fountain*, Duchamp in his letter to his sisters says “One of my female friends who had adopted the pseudonym Richard Mutt sent me a porcelain urinal as a sculpture...” The identity of the female friend has always been a mystery, but the proofs in the article (Elsa was in Pennsylvania at the time when the *Fountain* was submitted to the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, and the company that made these specific urinals was based in Pennsylvania are some proofs.) make a strong case that Elsa was the owner of the *Fountain*. In fact, she had been claiming found object as her works of art before Duchamp started experimenting with his readymades. I suggest you read the article; it is pretty fascinating and made me a little sad since you know I am a Duchamp fan (I still am). I guess it would make sense since he is a male figure and she is not...

Back to your question about what is it about art that makes us want to associate graphic design with it.. That is something I often think to myself. I can start by answering from a personal point of view: I would not want to only produce commercial works as this would not suffice my interests. What I like in art and why I would like graphic design to be more like it is the free will that comes with it. There is almost some kind of a narcissistic view of graphic design when it becomes close to art: the practice starts to be derived from individual expression; it becomes something that serves to one's name and to one's

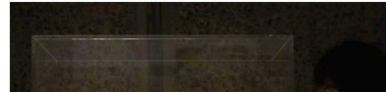
### Was Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain' actually created by a long-forgotten pioneering feminist?

In a new book, John Higgs looks at the story behind one of the most famous artworks of the 20th century

John Higgs Tuesday 8 September 2015 11:02 | [1 comment](#)



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interests primarily. Remember when I asked you whether or not there is an existential component in typography? Then, I guess there is. We would like to create works that showcase our interests to make valuable use of our time on this earth and to feel good about ourselves in doing so. Thus, in making or wanting graphic design to be more like art, we want it to have a greater (existential) purpose. The interesting question, to me, or what I have yet do not have an answer to is this: Is there no other discipline than art where one can pursue individual interests? Is that what defines art? If so, trying to claim something similar for graphic design, a similar understanding, would not help us differentiate design. As much as we want to claim the individual will that comes with associating graphic design with art, perhaps we should omit this tendency and instead find something that is specific to graphic design. I am not sure if this is possible since there are already so many different ways people have been practicing the discipline, but I wonder if you think this is possible? Or do you think this is worthwhile pursuit? Is there an end goal, reward, in disassociating graphic design from art?

31 July 2018

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/was-marcel-duchamps-fountain-actually-created-by-a-long-forgotten-pioneering-feminist-10491953.html>