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| **Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971)** |
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| Raoul Hausmann, the ‘Dadasoph,’ was an active participant in the Dada movement in Berlin, authoring key manifestoes, co-founding Club Dada, editing journals, and co-organizing the First International Dada Fair. He declared that Dada was ‘the only legitimate means of visual communication’ and argued that ‘everyone who liberates his innermost tendency is Dadaist.’[[1]](#footnote-1) Arguably Hausmann’s most lasting impact on modernism is his development of the medium of photomontage. Hausmann saw the cutting and pasting of photographs as a movement away from the traditional materials of art and role of the artist. Pictures culled from mass cultural sources became the raw material for biting social critiques. By re-purposing images from popular culture, Hausmann exposed their artificiality and challenged viewers’ assumption that photographs — and the ideologies behind them — are truthful. |
| Raoul Hausmann, the ‘Dadasoph,’ was an active participant in the Dada movement in Berlin, authoring key manifestoes, co-founding Club Dada, editing journals, and co-organizing the First International Dada Fair. He declared that Dada was ‘the only legitimate means of visual communication’ and argued that ‘everyone who liberates his innermost tendency is Dadaist.’[[2]](#footnote-2) For Hausmann, an artist could not engage with and critique the chaos and violence of World War I within the confines of academic traditions. Artists instead needed to search for new materials as a means for negotiating modernity and its relationship with the past. To confront a shattered world, one had to break some rules.  Hausmann’s unremarkable childhood did not foretell the radical, provocative nature of his future art. Born in Vienna, he moved to Berlin with his family in 1900. His earliest artistic training came from his father, an academic painter, followed by formal art school studies. But Hausmann soon came to reject those academic traditions and in 1918 he, along with Richard Huelsenbeck and others, founded Club Dada in Berlin. At the Club’s first evening in April, Hausmann argued against traditional painting and for an expansion of the role of artists and artistic materials, declaring in his manifesto, *The New Material in Painting*, ‘You will come to see your true condition in Dada: wonderful constellations in real materials, wire, glass, cardboard, cloth […] but here for the first time there is no repression, no anxiety...’[[3]](#footnote-3)  Later that year, Hausmann travelled with fellow Berlin Dadaist Hannah Höch on a seaside holiday, where he claimed photomontage was born. Looking back years later, he explained that the idea that ‘one could […] make *pictures,* assembled entirely from cut-up photographs’[[4]](#footnote-4) came from seeing military portraits through the villagers’ windows. Families would personalize souvenir lithographs by cutting and pasting a portrait of their beloved service member atop the head of an anonymous soldier, which inspired Hausmann’s own cutting and pasting. Though his claims to have ‘conceived the idea of photomontage […] like a stroke of lightning’[[5]](#footnote-5) are overstated (examples of collaged photographs exist from the nineteenth century), Hausmann’s role in its development during the twentieth century is nonetheless significant and arguably represents his most lasting impact on modernism. He saw the use of photographic fragments as a movement away from the traditional materials of art and role of the artist. Pictures culled from mass cultural sources became the raw material for biting social critiques. By re-purposing images from popular culture, Hausmann exposed their artificiality and challenged viewers’ assumption that photographs — and the ideologies behind them — are truthful.  Hausmann’s art was not limited to photomontage. During the Dada years he experimented widely, creating poster poems, sound poems, multi-media assemblages, performances, and even designing a (never realized) Optophone — an instrument intended to translate light into sound and sound into image.  In 1933 Hausmann left Germany for Ibiza, where his work turned to photographing the architecture and people of the region. The pictures he created indicate little evidence of modernity, recalling his 1922 statement that ‘The task of the future is that of achieving a new primeval condition.’[[6]](#footnote-6) Hausmann eventually settled in France and returned late in life to oil painting as well as collage and photomontage. He died in Limoges in 1971. |
| Further reading:  (Benson)  (Bergius)  (Doherty)  (Huelsenbeck)  (Züchner) |

1. Richard Huelsenbeck, *Dada Almanac* (London: Guernsey Press, 1993), 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Huelsenbeck, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hausmann, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada* (Paris, 1958), 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Raoul Hausmann, ‘Optophonetics,’ 1922, quoted in Marcella Lista, ‘Raoul Hausmann’s Optophone: ‘Universal Language’ and the Intermedia,’ 83, in *The Dada Seminars,* ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington: National Gallery of Art/CASVA, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)