

Dada, an art movement that became well known in the late 1910s and early 1920s, challenged traditional notions of art and aesthetics. Dada artists

or example, tossed colored scraps of paper into performed sound poems devoid of semantic value, and modeled a headpiece fashioned of sardine cans. To most art historians, Dada remains a culturally contingent expression of World War I trauma, nihilism, political disillusionment, and an aggressive attack on the

The author suggests that this negative interpretation originates from art history's methodological

blindness to the importance of play, not only to creative and artistic endeavors, but to human identity itself. Dada is characterized by an effervescent love of improvisation, curiosity, novelty and an unselfconscious exploration of the phenomenal world; it emphatically professed to be “anti-art” and “a state-of mind.” When considered from

the perspective of play research and positive psychology, Dada emerges as an early and visionary milestone in understanding play as a fundamental expression of humanity almost a century before academia would take adult play seriously. Dadaists used found objects, newspaper clippings, cutouts, bits of string and textiles, dust, nails, all sorts of seemingly random or

castaway objects, and they delighted in employing chance in composing their works. To art historians, Dada is the enfant terrible of their discipline, an anarchic movement typically dubbed in art historical introductions as nihilistic, or called an iconoclastic attack on bourgeois aesthetics, or considered a pathological reenactment of the trauma of World War I. Dada, an art