

The Arrival of Dada In the Netherlands

La Revue du Feu and the collaboration of
one of "the best modern artists of the globe"

I.

The history of Dada in the Netherlands is by and large the history of the appropriation of Dadaism by Theo van Doesburg and the Stijl circle. The first traces of an actual appropriation of Dada are to be found, however, not in De Stijl, but, instead in a circle opposing De Stijl. On February 22, 1920, a soirée took place in an Amsterdam art gallery called Kunsthandel Heijstee. This soirée had been arranged to draw attention to an exhibition by the art group D'Orkaan (The Hurricane) as well as to the related journal, *La Revue du Feu* (Review of Fire), which was founded and edited by the well-off Belgian musician and poet, Arthur Pétronio.¹ Pétronio financed both the journal and the exhibitions of D'Orkaan.

La Revue du Feu was conceived as a fortnightly, with expensive color plates and *hors texte* supplements—in other words: a very pretentious journal, as may be inferred from its subtitle, "Premier—Grand Organe—Universaliste—International." Also a pompous "Déclaration" in its first issue, published in November 1919, indicated that the stakes were set high:

La Revue du Feu sees the daylight. From this very day, a new Aurora announces itself to us. A free alignment among all free men.

The name invoked by us—"Universalists"—is nothing frightful.

We are not a school, we are not a group fabricating manifestos; we don't want noise and terror; we want to become again sound and strong men, great and profound spirits, pioneers of the avant-garde of modern revolutionary thought.

First of all, we want Works and Artists.

The universalist movement, of which *La Revue du Feu* is the driving organ, is not exclusively artistic. It is also a social movement; social in its goal, social in its essence. It is social not only because

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it draws its essence from the very collectivity of races—which it represents, for which it acts, and which it modifies at the same time—but also because it bears in itself that maximum of intensity, plastic dynamism and individual expansion that creates an ideal society by the modification of extrinsic relations, the establishment of the community of ideas and actions on a sympathetic or synergetic way.

Our principal obligation will be the realization of a universalization of intellectualities....²

The proclaimed "universalism" was expressed in *La Revue du Feu* in several ways. First of all, the journal was multilingual. In the two issues that were published in November 1919 and November/December 1919, contributions could be found in Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, and English. The international character was also emphasized in the second issue by a short statement in which, alongside Pétronio as the "director-founder" of the journal, "secretaries" from Belgium, Italy, and the Dutch East Indies were named.³ In the same issue, the success of the journal was already claimed in a rather magniloquent way:

LA REVUE DU FEU is propagated in all countries of the World (Netherlands, France, Belgium, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, United States, Greece, Egypt, Indies, Algeria, South Africa).

LA REVUE DU FEU has assured itself of the collaboration of the best modern artists of the Globe.

LA REVUE DU FEU is not only an artistic organ, but also a political and social organ.⁴

The claim of a worldwide network by Pétronio is anything but unique. Only a year and a half earlier, Richard Huelsenbeck had claimed exactly the same for Club Dada: "Club Dada has... members in all parts of the globe—in Honolulu as well as in New Orleans and Meseritz."⁵ This claim was not the only similarity between *La Revue du Feu* and the Dada project. The undeniable international setup of *La Revue du Feu* was to some extent also comparable with the expressly international character of the Zurich Dada organs *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Dada*, and *Der Zeltweg*. *La Revue du Feu*, like these journals, was also characterized by stylistic pluralism. However, whereas the Zurich Dadaists focused on the main avant-garde currents of the pre-war period and strived for a synthesis of expressionism, futurism, and cubism, the editors of *La Revue du Feu* were less fastidious. The "universalism" of the journal can be typified as "anything goes." Besides expressionist, cubist, and futurist contributions, (post-)impressionism, symbolism, and (post-)naturalism were represented as well.

From announcements for upcoming issues (which were never published) as well as from advertisements announcing exhibitions, it can be concluded that the circle of *La Revue du Feu* tried to join the

forefront of the contemporary avant-garde. The names of members of the circle, like Erich Wichman and Louis Saalborn, appeared side-by-side with the main protagonists of the European avant-garde. Pablo Picasso, Oscar Kokoschka, Franz Marc, Carlo Carra, Vassily Kandinsky, Kees van Dongen, Paul Gauguin, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec are announced not only as the "best modern artists," but also as collaborators of the journal, *La Revue du Feu*. The names of these artists were also featured as contributors to the exhibitions of the associated art group, D'Orkaan. However, this collaboration seems to have been mainly wishful thinking. At least in the two issues of *La Revue du Feu* that were actually published, the journal contained a mishmash without a clear concept, although the emphasis was on modernism and the avant-garde. *Revue du Feu* contained (borrowed) articles by Kasimir Edschmid, Friedrich Huebner, and Gustav Landauer from Germany; as well as contributions by Albert Gleizes, René Arcos, and Pierre Jouve from France. However, most of the review contained contributions from local (Dutch and Belgian) authors and artists, who set the tone of the journal: Pierre Colin, Henri Le Fauconnier, Laurens van Kuik, Louis Saalborn, Wim Schuhmacher, Gustave De Smet, Valentijn Uytvanck, Piet Van Wijngaerdt, Wichman, etc.⁶

There can be no doubt that the editors of *La Revue du Feu* tried to create a review which was to be compatible on an international level with the German expressionist periodicals *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, both in its layout, as well as in its mixture of criticism, literary exercises, and reflections on artistic, philosophical, and political questions. However, they did so without a clear aesthetic or political concept.⁷

II.

La Revue du Feu can also be regarded as a response to another Dutch avant-garde journal, *De Stijl*. *De Stijl* had been founded in 1917 and indubitably became the most important mouthpiece of the Dutch avant-garde, neither because it represented the whole panorama of Dutch "new art," nor because it was generally accepted as such (the contemporary critical response in the Low Countries was by and large dismissive), but rather because it developed a clear-cut constructivist program of its own. In some ways, the De Stijl group can be compared to a small sect. The review had about one hundred subscribers, many of them contributors in one way or another, and only contributions that fitted the quite strict constructivist program were accepted.⁸ In comparison with the diffuse spectrum of (other) "new" artists from the Low Countries, *De Stijl* distinguished itself by quite rigid criteria. This rigor, in combination with a considerable portion of conceit, led to the rejection of any other (local) move toward avant-garde "new art."

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De Stijl and the work of its protagonists are nowadays widely considered as *the* Dutch contribution to the historical avant-garde. Historically, though, *De Stijl* was anything but the only Dutch artistic formation with avant-garde pretensions. In addition to *De Stijl*, with members/contributors living all over the Netherlands as a loose network of correspondents, a whole range of other groups of artists with innovative aspirations could be distinguished in the late 1910s and early 1920s: *De Branding* in Rotterdam, *Het Signaal* (The Signal) in Bergen and Amsterdam, *De Ploeg* in Groningen, *De Sphinx* in Leiden, and finally, all in Amsterdam, *De Anderen* (The Others), *De Moderne Kunstkring* (The Modern Art Circle), *De Onafhankelijken* (The Independents), and *D'Orkaan*. Unlike *De Stijl*, these groupings did not have clearly formulated programs. As in the case of *D'Orkaan* and *La Revue du Feu*, they were instead marked by an open character that implied that *Stijl* contributors were also involved in certain groups.⁹

These groups were primarily communities of common interest, mainly intended to create possibilities for collective exhibitions by their respective members outside of an academic framework. Besides this strategic dimension, most of these groupings, again as in the case of *D'Orkaan* and *La Revue du Feu*, showed a preference for expressionism, yet without the binding directives that can be found in *De Stijl*. Because of this and because of the explicit subjectivism of many of the more outspoken participating artists, these artists and groups were sharply criticized by van Doesburg. In line with his rejection of their artistic conceptions and praxis, van Doesburg did not even mention them in his surveys of Dutch modern art in the foreign avant-garde press. Published in 1919 in the Italian review, *Valori Plastici* (Plastic Values), "L'arte nuova in Olanda" (The new art in Holland) is a typical series of articles. In this discussion of "new art" in the Netherlands, van Doesburg presented only contributors to *De Stijl* as "Dutch innovators" and as the sole representatives of a "new style" in the Netherlands. All other approaches toward a new art or a new style not identical with the style of *De Stijl* were deliberately ignored.¹⁰ Since several contributors of *La Revue du Feu* were participating in other artistic groupings expressly ignored by van Doesburg, such as *De Branding*, *Het Signaal*, *De Onafhankelijken*, and *D'Orkaan*, *La Revue du Feu* can be regarded as an attempt by artists from these competing groups to seek the international limelight as well and to strike a different modernist chord from the Low Countries aside from—and, partially, even against—*De Stijl*.

This intention was obvious in a critical contribution to *La Revue du Feu* by one of the editors, the artist and poet Wichman. Wichman lashed out in the article "Coups de Feu. De l'Étalage au Magasin (Chronique des Pays-Bas)" at "Monsieur Theo van Doesburg et son Style."¹¹ Wichman had been a close friend of van Doesburg and had even discussed with him the foundation of a review in the years preceding *De Stijl*.¹²

However, he now jeered at the constructivist-geometrical experiments by the *Stijl* protagonists: Piet Mondrian, Bart van der Leck, Huszár, and van Doesburg. Arguing that De Stijl is not a movement, Wichman offered the following characterization:

[A]n artistic immobility, which is particularly remarkable from a national point of view, since this immobile movement, this ferocious negation of Life itself, this sterile and patient art... is only imaginable in these Low Countries, these Very Low Countries. It is the very Art of this center of tough and cold morality... of hypocrisy and Calvinist fear of life, of the iconoclasts, of bleak gloominess and without any hope, of this old dying, dead Holland, rotten since its first day, an eternally damned hell on earth!

Mister Mondrian, still a beautiful corpse, has found a nice square coffin; Mister Van der Leck, living artist, has let himself be killed squarely. Only Mister Huszár, of Hungarian origin, handles this manner in an easy and elegant way as it fits in well with his natural dryness. Let's keep silent about the others. Who bothers about Mister Theo van Doesburg, this devoted propagandist of the group? They allow him to paint, too. One good turn deserves another.¹³

Wichman seems to have been particularly irritated by van Doesburg's suggestion in *Valori Plastici* that De Stijl was to be regarded as the only group of innovative artists in the Netherlands—a hideous lie and conscious distortion of the real situation, Wichman argued, since van Doesburg knew better.

The contribution of Jan Wils, an architect associated with De Stijl, in the first issue of *La Revue du Feu* can be regarded in this context as an indication that the "universalist"-style pluralism of *La Revue du Feu* also comprised, on an aesthetic level, the style of De Stijl. The publication of Wils's contribution¹⁴ can also be regarded, though, as a willful attempt to drive a wedge between the collaborators of De Stijl. A short statement by van Doesburg in the December issue of *De Stijl* can be interpreted as a reaction to Wils's presence in *La Revue du Feu*. In December 1919 in *De Stijl*, van Doesburg declared, "To prevent further misunderstanding we feel the obligation to stress that the misleading impression by Mister Arthur Pétronio (editor of *La Revue du Feu*) as if *De Stijl* is supported and patronized by him in Holland is the result of a fabrication."¹⁵

Wichman was put in his place by van Doesburg in the third, closing section of "L'arte nuova in Olanda" in *Valori Plastici*, in which van Doesburg addressed the omission frowned upon by Wichman. He apologized to the Italian readers for discussing only the main modernizers in Dutch art (in other words: the artists of De Stijl). Van Doesburg stressed that he consciously left out all "quasi-modern" tendencies, which could be discussed another time, as he suggested. As an example of these "quasi-modern" artists, van Doesburg mentioned among others,

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the group De Anderen,¹⁶ which was founded by van Doesburg himself, Saalborn, and Wichman. As van Doesburg had withdrawn from De Anderen himself, it was obvious, at least to the well-informed reader, that the remaining "others" were implied by the "quasi-modernists."

III.

The conflict between van Doesburg and De Stijl, on the one hand, and Wichman and *La Revue du Feu*, on the other, is of particular interest since Dada in the Netherlands seems to be indissoluble from van Doesburg and De Stijl. Although the same issue of *De Stijl* in which van Doesburg drew a clear line between De Stijl and *La Revue du Feu* confirmed the receipt of Dadaist publications for the first time, it was not van Doesburg or De Stijl, but the circle surrounding *La Revue du Feu* that launched Dada in the Netherlands at the previously mentioned soirée of February 22, 1920.¹⁷

Following an account in the conservative art review *De Kunst* (The Art), the soirée started with a dance act in which the dancer, Marion Gray, "danced" an incomprehensible snake movement with the upper part of her body." This was probably a presentation of an *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance). Next came Pétronio, "making a mockery of the composers Ruyneman and Wagner," followed by Saalborn, who "was the most successful with poems of the Dadaist Kurt Schnitters (*sic*), since he had announced in advance that the audience would protest and (...) because the audience just loves such a laugh! As he let the poet say that the lovely, poetical name of Anna Blume could be spelled backwards as well as forwards and Anna, thus, was identical from the front and from the back, his comic triumph reached its summit and the auditorium seemed to die laughing."¹⁸

After a break, during which most of the audience apparently left, Pétronio continued with the performance of "Futurist, Cubist and Dadaist" music and the recitation of "ultra-stylistic-dadaist-cubist poetry."¹⁹ While Saalborn read with some certainty from Kurt Schwitters's first poetry collection, *Anna Blume*, it is questionable whether Pétronio's final contribution indeed possessed a Dadaist element. The author of the critique, N. H. Wolf, obviously detested the whole soirée. He accused Pétronio of surrounding himself with "a bunch of quasi-futurists" and "parasites, having their eye on his money."²⁰ The qualification "ultra-stylistic-dadaist-cubist poetry" seems in this context to be a rather global indication of avant-garde poetry, which may have made a very radical impression on Wolf, but could very well have been moderate expressionistic poetry.²¹

The soirée as a whole was certainly not the "first Dada-like soirée" in Holland, as August Hans den Boef and Sjoerd van Faassen have

suggested.²² It was rather the first occasion where Dadaist poetry was presented to a Dutch audience. The recitation of Schwitters's poetry could not be regarded as a fundamental conversion to Dadaism. The fact that the circle of *La Revue du Feu* brought Dada into practice for the first time in the Netherlands seemed, instead, to be part of a not entirely unsuccessful attempt to draw attention to a rather mediocre exhibition by means of an extravagant soirée, infused by the conscious "universalist" pluralism of Pétronio and *La Revue du Feu*, as well as an attempt to seek alliance with the forefront of the European avant-garde. The presentation of Schwitters's work coincided with the first reports on Dadaism in Berlin and Paris in the Dutch press²³ and it seemed as if *La Revue du Feu* tried to attract attention and upstage *De Stijl* by presenting the Dadaist novelty to the Dutch public. More importantly, the evening was an isolated event. Due to financial problems, Pétronio dropped his "universalist" project and returned to Belgium.²⁴ While the other participants of the evening—Saalborn, Rensburg, and Wichman—may have been unconventional figures in contemporary Dutch society, they were certainly no Dadaists.²⁵

Even though the Dadaist séance of *La Revue du Feu* was a once-only happening, the presentation of Schwitters outside of the framework of *De Stijl* did not remain a completely isolated event. In later years, Schwitters even became one of the regular contributors to expositions of the Rotterdam-based art circle *De Branding*, in which many contributors of *La Revue du Feu* were involved.

The Dada-Centrale in Holland: Paul Citroen and Erwin Blumenfeld

I.

The Dada presentation by *La Revue du Feu* had another consequence: it provoked a malicious remark by the Dutch artist Paul Citroen in Huelsenbeck's *Dada-Almanach*. "Citroen-Dada" was, in Huelsenbeck's almanac, the author of a letter entitled "Eine Stimme aus Holland" (A Voice from Holland), dated May 1920. The letter was written in German, interlaced with Dutch words and expressions. Referring to the soirée of *La Revue du Feu*, Citroen noted:

Ah well, finally some writers and painters gave a soirée a couple of weeks ago, where they recited poems by K. Schwitters as Dada. As you see, no idea of Dada. They just think that Dadaists are guys, who-what's the word?—pull the leg of the public...²⁶

Citroen was born and raised in Berlin and was an old acquaintance

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of several (future) Dadaists including George Grosz, Walter Mehring, and Huelsenbeck. Before Dada had become well established in Berlin, however, Citroen had left Berlin for Amsterdam in 1918, where he acted as an agent for Herwardt Walden's *Sturm* gallery, trying to sell the works of artists represented by *Der Sturm*.²⁷ It is noteworthy that in his role as *Sturm* agent, Citroen probably acted as an intermediary between the Berlin-based *Sturm* gallery and the Amsterdam music and art shop, Broekmans & Van Poppel, which in turn was closely affiliated with the circles of *La Revue du Feu*, *De Branding*, and *Het Signaal*. Even an exhibition including, among others, works by Kandinsky, Kokoschka, and Marc, works that were commissioned by *Der Sturm* and thus handled by its Dutch agent, Citroen, had been planned by D'Orkaan on the premises of Broekmans & Van Poppel in December 1919.

Citroen's ties to Walden, *Der Sturm*, and the circles around *La Revue du Feu* are all the more remarkable considering his quite hostile comments about the soirée held on February 22, 1920. In the related exhibition, works from the *Sturm* stable were also shown, most likely commissioned by Citroen as well. Citroen's polemical assertions may have been partly induced by his apparent misfortune as a *Sturm* agent. As he later indicated, the representation of *Der Sturm* in the Netherlands didn't bring the financial success he had hoped for. But there may also have been another reason: Citroen stood in direct contact with Huelsenbeck. Huelsenbeck was the personification of the Berlin-based Centralamt der deutschen Dada-Bewegung (Head Office of the German Dada movement). On the basis of his connection to Huelsenbeck, Citroen could well have been just the right person to introduce and represent Dada in the Netherlands. Yet Dada was pilfered right under his nose by a group of artists who, aside from the avant-garde aspirations some of them shared, certainly had hardly anything in common with the Dada project.

II.

In his letter to Huelsenbeck, "Citroen-Dada" presented himself as the spokesman of the Dada-Centrale in Holland, or rather he was portrayed as such by Huelsenbeck. In a caption of a portrait of Citroen (fig. 3.1), Huelsenbeck names both Citroen and "Jan Blomfield" as directors of this Dutch Dada office. "Jan Blomfield," also known as Jan Bloomfield, Erwin Bloomfield, and Erwin Bloomfeld, was born under the name of Erwin Blumenfeld.²⁸ Blumenfeld was a German artist who had a relationship with the Berlin circle of Grosz and Mehring. Blumenfeld was married to Citroen's cousin Lena.

During the war, Blumenfeld had been in charge of a German army brothel in Northern France. Later, he had been stationed in the trenches

in Flanders.²⁹ When the German front collapsed, Blumenfeld deserted from his retreating regiment. He went to Holland to start a new existence as a merchant. Among other things, he worked as a manager in a ladies' fashion department store. He also took up photography and later gained considerable success as a fashion photographer in Paris and New York.

Besides Blumenfeld and Citroen, only one other "proper Dadaist," "Sieg van Menk," was named by Citroen in his letter to Huelsenbeck of May 1920.³⁰ This is the only mention of "Sieg van Menk," who has not yet been traced. This third Dadaist was probably a fabrication by Citroen, Blumenfeld, or Huelsenbeck, like the "Dada-Centrale" in Holland. In reality, the Dada-Centrale in Holland only existed on the pages of *Dada-Almanach* and can be regarded as such, as a fictional outpost of Dada in Berlin.

Thus, it is doubtful whether this Dada offspring can actually be regarded as a genuine attempt to establish a Dada branch in the Netherlands. It is even more doubtful whether the letter presented as a "voice from Holland" was indeed written in Amsterdam in May 1920. The names used by Citroen or Huelsenbeck in the *Dada-Almanach* for the Dutch Dada outlet, Dada-Centrale in Holland, and Centrale commissie voor Kultur-Dada (Central Committee for Culture-Dada), were obviously derived from Huelsenbeck's letterhead in his Berlin Dada years: Centralamt der deutschen Dada-Bewegung. It is not unlikely that the letter was in fact written later and antedated to suggest greater authenticity. Most likely, the letter was written not in Amsterdam, but in Berlin, perhaps during the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe, held in Berlin, where Citroen was also among the visitors. At least the photo of Citroen, accompanying his letter as an illustration, was made in Berlin at the time of the Dada exhibition in July 1920.³¹

Citroen later asserted that "not Huelsenbeck, but Walter Mehring compiled the almanac and deliberately introduced errors in the German text by Bloomfield and Citroen; it should appear as if a Dutchman was writing German for the first time."³² It was, however, certainly not the first time that Citroen wrote German. On the contrary, he spoke and wrote German fluently and, instead, spoke Dutch with an unmistakably German accent and idiom. Although the letter was probably produced in Berlin, Citroen's suggestion that Mehring introduced Dutch idiom in his letter to Citroen seems quite unbelievable. Citroen was, first of all, the only one contesting the role of Huelsenbeck as editor of the almanac (though not the first to contest—here in yet another way—Huelsenbeck's importance to Dada in Berlin). What's more, neither Mehring nor Huelsenbeck would have been capable of distorting the German text by interlarding it with appropriate, accurately spelled Dutch words and expressions (except for some spelling errors, which were probably printer's mistakes, and not deliberate). Neither Mehring nor Huelsenbeck was in proper command of the Dutch language.

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Citroen's contribution comprised, thus, at least the Dutchifying of the German-written text and probably the supply of the proper data in the text as well. For example, the hint at the soirée of *La Revue du Feu* and the naming of Dutch journals in which press reports on Dadaism had been published could only have originated from someone informed about the Dutch situation.³³ Furthermore, Citroen was unquestionably the author of a "Dadaist *Apertu*" elsewhere in the *Dada-Almanach*. In a collection of such *apertus*, "Paul Citroen (Holland)" appears as representative of the Centrale commissie voor Kultur-Dada next to André Breton, Picabia, Philippe Soupault, Grosz, Huelsenbeck, and Mehring with the bon mot, *De chef is de baas* (The chief is the boss).³⁴

III.

Even when the Dutch Dada-Centrale was not regarded as a hoax and instead, the real presence of the Dada-Centrale in Holland under the supervision of Citroen and Blumenfeld was assumed, this Amsterdam "head office" only manifested itself in Berlin. Neither Citroen nor Blumenfeld were active as Dadaists in the Netherlands, setting aside their personal artistic and literary production, which was, in the case of Blumenfeld, only presented in a Dadaist framework outside Holland. Following Blumenfeld's later suggestions, Citroen started to create photomontages in 1919, which Citroen himself described as *Klebebilder* (collages).³⁵ These photomontages were compositions of facades of large buildings, by and large American high-rise complexes and skyscrapers, giving the impression of fastidious metropolitan areas (fig. 3.2).

Whether Citroen indeed started with these montages in 1919 remains rather questionable, despite his own assertion that some *Klebebilder* would have already existed in 1919. Unlike his younger brother Hans, Paul Citroen was not among the participating artists of the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe. Hans Citroen, fifteen years of age, participated as representative of the Jugendgruppe Dada (Youth Section Dada) at this "Dada Fair" with four collages (fig. 3.3).³⁶ Paul Citroen's montages were shown publicly for the first time in 1923 at an exhibition of the Bauhaus, where he was working at that time. Other Dadaist *Klebebilder* by Citroen must have been fabricated in the second half of the 1920s (and not 1919-1920), due to the simple circumstance that the buildings, of which images appear in these montages, were only completed in the 1920s, and not yet built when Citroen—according to his own claims—allegedly created them at the time of his Dada engagement.³⁷

A comparison of Citroen's collages with the work of other Dadaists reveals a clear relation between the "America-fever" of Grosz and John Heartfield, and Citroen's appropriation of the layout of American cities in his montages. An obvious similarity can be made out, for example,

between montages like *Dadamerika* by Grosz and Heartfield, and the (later) facade collages by Citroen.³⁸ Citroen himself insisted, however, that these *Klebebilder* were mainly inspired by similar work by his co-director of the Dutch Dada agency, Blumenfeld.³⁹ Indeed, clear resemblances can also be made out between some other (allegedly) early collages by Citroen and compatible work by Blumenfeld: combinations of collage and ink-drawing that are quite typical of Blumenfeld's experiments in the proximity of Dadaism (fig. 3.4). This holds true, for example, for a self-portrait of Citroen from 1921 (or later), in which Citroen combined a snapshot of himself with an ink drawing of a painter working on his easel (fig. 3.5).

Blumenfeld, for his part, commented quite condescendingly in this context about Citroen and his Dada works. Citroen was, according to Blumenfeld, "a little hypocritical coward with a loyal smile, as honest as a German history book," who "brought no idea of his own into the world, only borrowing and stealing" from others—and unjustly claimed to be one of the inventors of the photomontage.⁴⁰ Blumenfeld, accordingly, characterized the collaboration between Citroen and himself as a "maelstrom of human swindle" and a "school of mendacity with borrowed ideals and stolen ideas."⁴¹

Citroen—who later stated that the "cynicism" of the Dadaists did not appeal to him, even though he would "always belong to them as a creator of 'Klebebilder'"⁴²—may have created Dadaist montages and collages, yet he never presented them in a Dadaist setting, at least not in the 1910s and 1920s. Instead, Blumenfeld, working from Amsterdam, contributed on a modest scale to Dada both in Berlin and Paris.

Blumenfeld was present in the Dada issue of the Berlin review, *Schall und Rauch* (Sound and Smoke, as well as Hollow Words), with a cabaret song, "ATZE. Lenzgedicht" (ATZE. Spring Poem) in the style of Mehring. Blumenfeld was also one of the signatories of a Dadaist protest against the prohibition of films by Charlie Chaplin in Germany.⁴³ Whereas in many cases the names under collective Dada manifestos were printed without previous consent of the signatories, in this case, Blumenfeld may have indeed signed the manifesto. *Eine Stimme aus Holland* mentions that both directors of the Amsterdam Dada branch were regulars at the screening of Chaplin movies. They regarded Chaplin to be "the greatest artist of the world" on the basis of his "consequent Dadaism."⁴⁴ On a photomontage by Blumenfeld, sent to Tristan Tzara as a contribution for the planned (but never realized) Dadaist mega-publication, *Dadaglobe* (1920-21), Blumenfeld appeared with the corpse of a barely veiled female nude. The montage (fig. 3.6) bears the following inscription:

BLOOMFIELD HOLLAND
 BLOOMFIELD PRESIDENT DADA-CHAPLINIST
 BLOOMFIELD PRESIDENT DADA CHARLOTIN⁴⁵

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With this submission, Blumenfeld's active role in Dada ended. Soon afterward, he left Amsterdam for Paris, not to take up contact with the Parisian Dadaists, but to begin his career as a fashion photographer.

Notes

1. See Neuhuys, "Quelques poètes V.," 89.
2. Citation in Arthur Pétronio, "Déclaration," *La Revue du Feu* 1, no. 1 (1919): 1.
3. See *La Revue du Feu* 1, no. 2-3 (1919): [I]. The Belgian secretary of the review was Paul Colin, besides Pansaers and *Résurrection*, the most important propagandist for German expressionism in Walloon Belgium; cf. Marx, "'Résurrection' et les courants modernistes."
4. Citation in *La Revue du Feu* 1, no. 2-3 (1919): [I].
5. Huelsenbeck, "Dadaistisches Manifest," 40.
6. Some of the Belgian contributors, like René Arcos and Pierre Jouve, were previously collaborators of *Résurrection* and contributed later to *Ça Ira!*
7. It is noteworthy that several contributions in *La Revue du Feu* originated from the pre-Dadaist (though still expressionist) second series of the Berlin-based review, *Neue Jugend*, edited by Wieland Herzfelde. See Kasimir Edschmid, "Dem Gedächtnis der Tänzerin Angélique Holopainen," *La Revue du Feu* 1, no. 2-3 (1919): 2, and *Neue Jugend* 1, no. 8 (1916): 147. See also Gustav Landauer, "Strindberg," *La Revue du Feu* 1, no. 2-3 (1919): 2-4, and *Neue Jugend* 1, no. 7 (1916): 135-36.
8. This rigor was most obvious in the development towards a geometrical abstraction. The manifestos of *De Stijl* were in many respects no less vague than the declaration of *La Revue du Fe*, see "Manifest I," *De Stijl* 2, no. 1 (1918): 2-3; "Manifest II van 'De Stijl'. De literatuur," *De Stijl* 3, no. 6 (1920): 49-50; "Manifest III. Vers une nouvelle formation du monde," in *De Stijl* 4, no. 8 (1921): 123-24.
9. Several associates of *De Stijl* had been involved in these groups before the foundation of *De Stijl*, like van Doesburg and Vilmos Huszár in *De Anderen* and *De Sphinx*. To some extent, *Stijl* collaborators still participated in these other avant-garde groupings after the foundation of *De Stijl*, even at a time when van Doesburg was already engaged in polemics with the leading members of other groups concerning their inconsequent aesthetics and expressionist preferences; cf. Brinkman, *De Branding*, 22-26, 61-63.
10. Citation in Theo van Doesburg, "L'arte nuova in Olanda II," *Valori Plastici* 1, no. 6-10 (1919): 24.
11. Erich Wichman, "Coups de Feu. De l'Étalage au Magasin (Chronique des Pays-Bas). Monsieur Theo van Doesburg et son Style,"

La Revue du Feu 1, no. 2-3 (1919): 31-33.

12. See Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," 18.

13. Wichman, "Coups de Feu," 31.

14. Jan Wils, "De Moderne Bouwkunst," *LaRevue du Feu* 1, no. 1 (1919): 15-16.

15. Theo van Doesburg, "Mededeeling," *De Stijl* 3, no. 2 (1919): 24.

16. Van Doesburg, "L'arte nuova in Olanda III," 20.

17. The soirée was announced as "Tentoonstellingen. La Revue du Feu," in *De Kunst* 12, no. 630 (1920): 320.

18. N. H. Wolf, "La Revue du Feu. Openingsavond," *De Kunst* 12, no. 632 (1920): 343-44.

19. *Ibid.*, 344.

20. *Ibid.*

21. At least some later satirical verses by the Dutch poet Jacques Rensburg point in this direction. The dandy and Dante translator Rensburg, who, according to Wolf in *De Kunst*, acted as the "international secretary-general" of *La Revue du Feu*, published a booklet in 1925 entitled *Sonnetten van Piet Lut. Een interastraat communistische satire* (Sonnets by Piet Lut. An inter-astral communist satire. Amsterdam: Van Looij, 1925). In this collection of satirical verse Rensburg presented the views of "Piet Lut." The word *pietlut* means "niggler" in Dutch. In a sonnet, "Het juiste midden" (The proper middle), Rensburg seems to caricature Wolf's critique in *De Kunst*: "Moderation, that still the classic!/The rest is bombast or rhetoric./I want nothing to do with the eccentric./No, the proper Middle!/The rest is Dada,/Cubism and other isms, which/infatuate this sick race and make it find the knickknacks/ingenious." Citation in Jaap Meijer, *J. K. Rensburg 1870-1943, een joodse graalzoeker* (Amsterdam: De Engelbewaarder, 1981), 119.

22. August Hans den Boef and Sjoerd van Faassen, "Een vriendschap van concurrenten? Kurt Schwitters en Theo van Doesburg," *Bzzlletin* 25, no. 229 (1995): 40.

23. For early reports on Dada in Berlin and Paris in the Dutch press: cf. Wenzel Frankemölle, "Het Dadaïsme," in *De Amsterdammer*, January 10, 1920; J. C. Peereboom, Om ons heen. Dadaïsme, in *Haarlems Dagblad*, March 30, 1923; "Dit en Datjes. Dada," in *Geïllustreerd Stuiversblad* [1920], reproduced in: *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage*, Vol. 1, Part 2 (1919-1920), ed. Cornelia Thater-Schulz (Berlin: Argon, 1989), 687; Adrienne Lautère-Heineken, "Uit het Parijsche Leven," in *Haagsche Post*, April 10, 1920. The contributions in *De Amsterdammer* and the *Haagsche Post* are mentioned in Paul Citroen, "Eine Stimme aus Holland," *Dada-Almanach*, 102.

24. See Brinkman, *De Branding*, 64.

25. This holds true as well for an anti-political venture of Wichman—the so-called Rapaille-Partij (Scum Party)—with an obvious congeniality with the political interventions by Club Dada in Berlin and its Oberdada

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Baader. Wichman founded the Rapaille-Partij with anarchist support in 1921 in a not quite unsuccessful attempt to ridicule and compromise the Dutch political establishment. The party participated in the Amsterdam city council elections of 1921, with the obtuse vagabond Cornelis de Gelder, widely known as Had-je-me-maar (If-you-only-had-me), heading the list of candidates. An election manifesto of the Rapaille-Partij demanded, among other things, free fishing in the Vondelpark, the main Amsterdam city park. Not only Had-je-me-maar but also other candidates were actually elected in the Amsterdam city council. Soon after this political success, however, the party disintegrated. Wichman withdrew from the Rapaille-Partij and became in the next years a devoted follower of Mussolini; cf. Hans Ramaer, *De piramide der tirannie. Anarchisten in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1977), 37-38; Atte Jongstra, "Erich Wichman 1890-1929," in Erich Wichman, *Het witte gevaar. Over melk, melkgebruik, melkmisbruik & melkzucht. Een ketterij tegen "de goden dezer eeuw"* (Amsterdam: C. J. Aarts, 1979), 35-38.

26. Paul Citroen, "Eine Stimme aus Holland," *Dada-Almanach*, 103.

27. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 23-25.

28. See Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 278-83.

29. See Erwin Blumenfeld, *Aus tausendjähriger Zeit* (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1976), 232-38; cf. Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege! Guerre a la Guerre! War against War! Oorlog aan den Oorlog!* (Frankfort/Main: Zweitausendeins, 1980), 172-77.

30. Citroen, "Eine Stimme aus Holland," 103.

31. See *Dada-Almanach*, 104.

32. Citation in Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 26.

33. An obvious example of a printer's error and a pun all in one, introduced in the text by someone acquainted with the Dutch cultural situation and in command of the Dutch language was the reference to a journal apparently entitled *Qude Amsterdammer* (Citroen, "Eine Stimme aus Holland," 102) in which an article on Dada had been published. "Qude" is most likely *Oude*,— the Dutch word for "old." The proper name of the paper referred to was *De Amsterdammer*, in the vernacular, the "Green Amsterdammer," on the basis of the color of the advertisement section. This respected weekly met competition in 1920 from another review, *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, a "New Amsterdammer." Although "Qude" is not a Dutch word and probably a misspelling of *Oude*, "Qude" can be interpreted as a combination of *Oude* and *Koude* (in Dutch, cold). Details like these were most certainly not known to Huelsenbeck or Mehring. The article pointed at by Citroen is Frankemoëlle, "Het Dadaïsme."

34. "Dadaistische Apertu's," *Dada-Almanach*, 159; the official name used here is partly Dutch (*Centrale commissie*), partly German (*Kultur*).

35. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 25-26.

36. See Hans Citroen, "Die Angel, Plastik aus der Vogelperspektive," "Wilsons 14 Punkte," "Landkarte Dada," and "Das Netz," in *Erste*

Internationale Dada-Messe, ed. Wieland Herzfelde (exhib. cat., Berlin: Kunsthandel Otto Burchard, 1920), 4.

37. See Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 280.

38. Ibid.

39. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 25.

40. Blumenfeld, *Aus tausendjähriger Zeit*, 105 and 113.

41. Ibid., 105. Cf. also Willem Ellenbroek, "Een traditionalist aan de wieg van vele legenden. Paul Citroen, schilder in het midden," in *De Volkskrant*, April 10, 1998.

42. Citation in Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 28.

43. See Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 281.

44. *Dada Almanach*, 104.

45. Citation in Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 282. An announcement of *Dadaglobe* by Tzara doesn't mention Blumenfeld, but Citroen instead; cf. Tristan Tzara, "Eye-cover, Art-cover, Corset-cover, Authorization," in *new york dada 1921*, 3.