RICHARD HAMILTON

LE GRAND DÉCHIFFREUR

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DECIPHERING MARCEL DUCHAMP

For more than half a century the British artist Richard Hamilton engaged in an extremely intense and incredibly erudite dialogue with the work of Marcel Duchamp. His typographic translation of the notes that surround Duchamp's masterpiece "La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même" [The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even]—which Duchamp had put together in the form of facsimiles in his "Boîte Verte" [Green Box]—was published in 1960. Six years later, Hamilton finished reconstructing the "Grand Verre" [Large Glass] for the retrospective "The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp" which he organized at the Tate Gallery in London. This commitment to Duchamp's work, as methodical as it was devoted, not only had an influence on his own, but also gave rise to texts of rare quality that constitute an intimate and extremely well informed reading of the artist's oeuvre. The correspondence initiated in 1956 as a result of Hamilton's interest in the "Green Box" ended with Duchamp's death in 1968. It reveals on the one hand Hamilton's ongoing creative penetration of his ideas, and on the other the existence of a close, friendly relationship that grew up between the two artists.

In the course of two long conversations Hamilton, with characteristic eloquence and preciseness, questioned Duchamp about his youth and the concept of the readymades, as well as his vision of the artist. The frankness with

which Duchamp replied to the questions posed by the younger man is a sign of the respect he very soon had for the person he called his "great decipherer." The selection of texts, letters, and interviews that constitute this book attest to the complicity between these two major figures who overturned the basis of aesthetic experience.

The collection "Lectures Maison Rouge" has as its ambition to propose artist's texts which interrogate at the same time museology, exhibition making, and the work of certain artists themselves.