

ART WORLD

Marcel Broodthaers and the Art of the Put-On

Blake Gopnik, Tuesday, April 19, 2016



THE DAILY PIC (#1531): The great Belgian artist [Marcel Broodthaers](#) made some fascinating objects, and many of them are on view in the current MoMA show of his work. But it could be that, like his close colleague [Andy Warhol](#), to take in his full artistic production you have to consider almost everything he did with his artist's hat on. For that much larger view of the Belgian, [a show at Alden Projects](#) in New York is vital. It includes a vast assortment of documents and ephemera that Broodthaers used to spread news of himself and his art, and to assert that his art and he were one. The Daily Pic will wander in those woods for the rest of this week.

Today's Pic shows the announcement for Broodthaers's first exhibition as an artist, in 1964, after he'd abandoned his life as a poet and come up with the idea of "inventing something insincere" (i.e., saleable art). The announcement is printed on pages from a fashion magazine, proving its insincerity and connecting it to the idea of the "put on", one of the most important conceits of 1960s culture that we've almost forgotten today. The idea of the "put on", constantly mentioned in texts from the era, revolved around the notion that any creator truly on the cultural vanguard was as likely to be pulling your leg ("putting you on") as giving you something serious to cogitate. Or, in the case of masters like Broodthaers and Warhol, was pulling your leg as a form of deep thought. For all the substantial and sober contemplation given to the profundities of Broodthaerian objects, it's also important to recognize a spirit of play and trickery. The ephemera at Alden Projects is the place to go for that.