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Playing Duchamp

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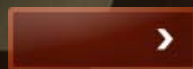
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Artist	Results	Commentary	Game Snapshot
Erika Lincoln	Duchamp Wins	By move 6, Duchamp has taken control of the center of the board with an aggressive 3-pawn row. Lincoln plays it safe, a little too much so and doesn't capitalize on what could have been a strong king-side fianchetto counterattack. By move 8, with Duchamp's advance of the pawn to b4, Lincon's fate is sealed as there is no recovering from her weakened defensive position.	
John Dugan	Duchamp Wins	Dugan maintains a tight pawn formation with strong center deployment. However, Duchamp attacks mercilessly and by move 9 has forked Dugan's queen-rook. This forces him to lose a valuable piece without positional compensation.	
Glenn Rigby	Duchamp Wins	Duchamp counters Rigby's Queen's Gambit with the Slav decline. By move 11, Duchamp has put Rigby into a pickle and Rigby responds with measures too aggressive. Duchamp pounces and pushes Rigby into resignation by move 17.	
Michael Szpakowski	Duchamp Wins	Szpakowski exhibits a strong opening after Duchamp's customary. However, after attacking with his bishop Szpakowski soon finds himself with an open board, a vulnerable king and Duchamp's queen in a position to pick off loose pawns for Duchamp's material gain.	
Harold Schellinx	Duchamp Wins	Schellinx opens with Queen's pawn and by move 3, Duchamp returns with a queenside fianchetto. By move 8, Duchamp has a slight positional advantage. Schellinx's pawns are overadvanced and knights are isolated into an overly defensive stance. Anticipating loss, Schellinx mysteriously resigns.	
David Jhave Johnson	Duchamp Wins	Duchamp brings his queen out early and leaves himself vulnerable to attack. Jhave seizes the opportunity and by move 10 has a slight positional edge. However, Jhave attacks with his queen and rook instead of his lesser pieces. In move 13, Jhave blunders with Rd5. Duchamp returns with exd5. There is little doubt that white was overextended, but the position was a recoverable one.	
Jesse Scott	Duchamp Wins	Jesse Scott plays an irregular Blackmar-Diemer gambit and later a pawn trade at 9. dxc5 Bxc5, which leaves undeveloped pieces on one side of the board and over-extended pieces on the other. Duchamp exploits this weakness and by move 14 has material and positional advantage.	
Lovid	Duchamp Wins	Lovid opens with King's Pawn and Duchamp plays an irregular Caro-Kann defense. By move 8, Lovid has control of the board center, however, they let Duchamp's bishops form a deadly attack. Duchamp soon has positional advantage and grinds down on White's pawn at d3 until Duchamp is well-deployed and up a pawn. Lovid cannot recover.	

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About the Project

During my childhood, I was a chess whiz and spent many hours playing against a primitive chess computer my father bought me. I reveled in the infinite possibilities on such a small board. When playing friends, I learned about imagination and deception: how to set traps, feign weaknesses and when to attack. After university, I became a computer programmer and in later years, I transitioned into the contemporary artworld as a new media artist. Fascinated by paradigm shifts such as those created by Duchamp, I wanted honor his legacy as a both an artist and chess player -- the two are inseparable. Combining my early love of chess with my algorithmic skills and a current passion for creating conceptual media artwork, this piece serves this purpose.

Scott Kildall

The Chess Engine

Based on 72 recorded tournament games by played by Marcel Duchamp in the 1920s and 1930s alongside conversations with Jennifer Shahade, a chess and Duchamp expert, I abstracted various principles regarding his chess strategies. From this knowledge, I modified the [GNU Chess code](#), under GPL license. The code is written in C and presented a challenging problem of designing a computer algorithm to play like a specific person.

For example, computers generally perform searches on all possible moves. Even a rookie chess player knows that moving your king into the center of board at the beginning of the game results in certain defeat. But, chess algorithms will typically evaluate this move with just as much effort as well-known plays. In effect, they know no history. They don't adjust their play to specific players and operate as blind evaluators.

For this project, I throttled the level of depth analysis by the code to make the computer play at Duchamp's skill level. The [ELO chess ratings](#) were not in effect during Duchamp's chess years, nor were more developed chess schools of thought. The estimation is that he would have been rated as approximately a 2100-level player. Duchamp also adhered to the [Hypermodern chess school](#), which was pioneered by [Aron Nimzowitsch](#) and advocates strategies such as controlling the center board through distant pieces.

The most significant modifications, therefore, were around the skill level of the engine and several specific openings. I also favored certain tactics such as the [fianchetto](#), which was often played by Duchamp. I built in chances of blunders later in the game, as sometimes happened to Duchamp when he got tired - physical fatigue doesn't affect computer code. I built in several subtleties into the code such as a more aggressive style when an opponent was playing weakly at the beginning of the game and a proclivity to sacrifice pieces for better positions.

The computer plays like Marcel Duchamp would have based on existing records. It captures the essence, but not the actuality of his play. From an incomplete archive in another time, I can only hope to approximate and reinterpret. Duchamp's chess-work is inseparable from his art practice and his style of gameplay merits this conceptual artwork.



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Credits

- 👑 **Producer and Conceptual Designer:** [Scott Kildall](#)
- 👑 **Web Design:** [Studio Astrid](#)
- 👑 **PHP Programming:** Wild Rhombus Software
- 👑 **Flash Programming:** [Ash Sechler](#)
- 👑 **Flash and Graphic Design:** [Jesse Egan](#)
- 👑 **3D Chess Pieces:** [Daisuke Imai](#)
- 👑 **2D Chess Pieces:** [John Dugan](#)
- 👑 **Special Thanks to** [Jennifer Shahade](#)

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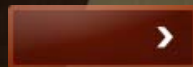
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