

HEDGECONE RAD AND THE PERSISTENCE OF THE RELEASED OBJECT

*A Critical Commentary on
HedgeCone Rad by Viktor Genel
and the Practice of Deutilization*



HedgeCone Rad, 2014
Photograph from the artist's archive

Arteanity Digital Archive | Deutilization | HedgeCones

I EXPANSION WITHOUT DISAPPEARANCE

HedgeCone Rad extends an existing work without requiring that work to cease being itself. In 2014, Viktor Genel added 42-inch yellow stacker cones to the complete construction of HedgeCone, first realized in 2013. The compact red-orange body remained within a more expansive arrangement of projecting yellow forms. This continuity makes Rad more than a change of scale: it asks what happens to an object after its departure from prescribed service has already produced an artwork. [1]

Within the HedgeCones corpus and the Deutilization realm, the two artifacts establish different moments of that inquiry. HedgeCone withdraws new traffic cones from their assigned task and assembles them into a geometric body. Rad introduces further serviceable cones while retaining that body. The new components undergo a departure from their prescribed street use; the earlier core enters another relation. Calling the whole operation a second Deutilization would obscure the fact that the core's original traffic assignment had already been interrupted.

The complete HedgeCone remains Rad's structural core. Its inclusion establishes a relation between two work identities rather than a succession in which the later work abolishes the earlier one. An object can enter another construction while remaining identifiable within it. Rad gives this proposition a material specificity: the earlier work is present as an organized body, not merely recalled through a title or resemblance. [2, 10]

II THE READYMADE REMAINS PART OF THE QUESTION

Deutilization and the Duchamp Legacy provides a useful framework for this relation. Duchamp's work and Deutilization can interrupt prescribed service through overlapping operations, even when they direct attention toward different questions. Rad's material assembly belongs within this continuing inquiry into the readymade: what survives a changed assignment, and what new relations can become available? [3]

Bicycle Wheel offers a particularly useful comparison. Duchamp's 1913 assembly places a wheel and fork on a stool, obstructing ordinary seating and separating wheel rotation from transport. The wheel can still turn. Its physical capacity persists after the ensemble withdraws it from the vehicle relation in which that capacity ordinarily serves. Duchamp's enjoyment of watching it rotate further shows that interruption can coexist with a new activity. Selection and designation are therefore insufficient as an exclusive account of his intervention: the work also involves assembly and altered material relations. [4]

Rad likewise leaves its components active. Their lengths project into space; their surfaces remain visible; their forms participate in the construction. These capacities do not contradict Deutilization, because the relevant interruption concerns prescribed service rather than all possible action. The distinction also prevents a false opposition between Duchamp's supposed indifference to physical things and Genel's attention to them. The artists' emphases differ, but material persistence after a changed assignment belongs to both accounts.

Fountain sharpens the issue of naming. The 1917 defense in *The Blind Man* joins a changed title and point of view to the disappearance of the object's "useful significance." Deutilization and the Duchamp Legacy reads this as an opening of thought rather than proof that a title must become a total instruction. In Rad, a new name marks a distinct work without cancelling the identity of its included core. Naming can register a relation without exhausting what that relation permits a viewer to think. [3, 5]

III CAPACITIES DISCOVERED AND RELATIONS MADE

The contrast between shorter red-orange cones and longer yellow additions differentiates core and extension. The earlier construction remains perceptible through and between the outward projections. A viewer can apprehend the encompassing form and then recover the included body. The work offers more than a silhouette: its visible organization permits attention to move between the whole and the work retained within it.

The original core organizes thirty 18-inch cones through their square bases in a small rhombicosidodecahedral arrangement. Rad inherits that organization rather than beginning with an unrelated support. The extension changes the prominence of the core: its compactness becomes legible against longer projections. The retained object consequently serves as both an identifiable work and a structural condition of another work. Inclusion changes its relations without making its identity interchangeable with the identity of Rad. [2]

This is also a reason to distinguish discovery from construction. A manufactured cone already possesses a length, a profile, a base, and particular material behavior. Genel does not invent those properties. Their relation within Rad, however, is made through artistic decisions. The expanded form is not a secret sculpture that the manufacturer unknowingly concealed in the equipment. What becomes perceptible results from an encounter between existing capacities and an authored arrangement.

The distinction follows the Duchamp essay's caution about essence. A property that exceeds an object's usual service does not establish an eternal inner truth or an intention behind its manufacture. Nor must the properties recruited by

the artwork have been accidental. A feature designed for one task may participate in another relation. Rad's force lies in making the original assignment insufficient to describe the present construction, without denying the specificity of the things from which it is made. [3]

IV PRESENTATION AND THE DEMAND FOR SERVICE

Traffic cones normally make an instruction visible. Their shapes and colors organize conduct by indicating an obstacle, a restricted route, or a protected area. In Rad, those recognizable features gather attention toward a body whose projections no longer administer a route. The object's familiarity survives, but familiarity does not restore its command. Recognition of the equipment and perception of the construction can alternate without either account becoming sufficient.

Public presentation places this changed relation near other demands. At the Lawn on D in July 2015, Rad entered an urban recreational setting. At TEDxSomerville's REINVENT event at Tufts on September 27, 2015, it appeared alongside the winged incarnation of MeconoMorph. Rad was also assembled for BWAC's Wide Open 7 exhibition in Brooklyn in May 2016. These encounters placed the same construction within settings associated with recreation, the presentation of ideas, and juried exhibition. They changed its conditions of address without requiring a new work identity. [6, 7, 8]

An event can nevertheless recruit an artwork into another service: attracting attention, illustrating an idea, or supplying a memorable image. Deutilization offers no automatic immunity from these expectations. The conceptual question is whether such uses remain partial encounters with the work or become prescriptions that exhaust it. A conference theme may orient a viewing without explaining every material relation; exhibition selection may recognize a work without supplying its final meaning.

This distinction also qualifies the authority of the exhibition record. An appearance establishes that the work entered a particular setting. It does not establish what every viewer experienced or prove that public exposure constitutes the work's existence. The histories of circulation become conceptually useful when they reveal changing conditions of encounter, rather than when they are treated as accumulated credentials.

V INTERRUPTION, DAMAGE, AND PERSISTENCE

The 2020 State Employee Art Exhibit at the Atrium Gallery in Providence brings a different interruption into view. RISCA's published schedule ran from February 24 to May 1. According to Genel, the reception planned for April 7

never occurred because the building entered lockdown. The installed exhibition remained in place without its anticipated public occasion. A July 10 photographic account records its eventual takedown. [9, 10]

Genel recalls that, during the closure, intruders broke windows and entered the building. One yellow projection was knocked out of Rad but remained at the site; he recovered it when access resumed. The July record documents the detached component and describes the damage as repairable. The episode makes a distinction central to the work concrete: a component can cease to occupy its place without ceasing to be present. [9, 10]

Accidental or violent damage is not, by itself, Deutilization. The departure from traffic service had occurred through the authored construction long before the intrusion. The later detachment interrupted a relation that the artwork had established. To treat this event as an additional liberation would confuse injury to the work with the practice that produced it, and would turn an imposed loss into an artistic intention. [3]

The episode instead separates physical capacity, configured integrity, and work identity. The yellow component persisted materially while no longer participating in its installed relation. Rad remained an identifiable work whose condition had changed. This does not make damage irrelevant or suggest that any altered arrangement is an equally authentic incarnation. Identification of a damaged work and recognition of a complete configuration are different judgments.

The canceled reception makes a parallel distinction possible. Withdrawal of access suspended an expected encounter without undoing the installation. Public presentation and material continuity can come apart. The work was neither returned to traffic service by its inaccessibility nor conceptually completed by the absence of viewers. What persisted was a construction, a history, and the possibility of renewed encounter. Its isolation placed limits on access, not a new meaning beyond dispute.

VI IDENTITY WITHOUT INTERPRETIVE CLOSURE

Rad's retained core and its damaged projection pose the same question from different directions: how much change can a work admit while remaining this work? The core demonstrates continuity through inclusion; the detached component demonstrates continuity through an acknowledged interruption of configuration. Neither supports an unlimited license to alter the construction. Both require an account of the particular relations that matter to its identity.

The cones leave an assigned industrial task and enter an artwork with constraints of its own. Geometry, attachment, the retained HedgeCone, and the distinction between assembled and disassembled states all establish conditions. Deutilization consequently cannot mean the permanent abolition of obligation. A released object can acquire a new order without making its earlier release fictitious.

Yet a condition of identity need not be a command to interpretation. Preserving the core or restoring a detached projection can protect the conditions under which the work remains available for thought. It need not instruct viewers to extract one authorized lesson. Conversely, a perfectly preserved installation can still be narrowed by an account that reduces it to an illustration of a theory. Physical fidelity and interpretive openness are related responsibilities, but neither guarantees the other. [3]

Rad extends Deutilization beyond the initial interruption of service. It follows objects into authored relations, follows an existing work into another work, and follows the resulting construction through changing conditions of visibility and integrity. Its dialogue with Duchamp rests on the persistence of capacities after their customary assignment ceases to be exhaustive. What is released is not matter from every relation, but the claim that one relation determines everything the object can become.

SOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

References support historical and material statements. The conceptual arguments are critical interpretations. The artist's firsthand account is distinguished from contemporaneous public documentation.

[1] Viktor Genel, HedgeCone Rad, photographic album, July 2014. Documents the expanded construction. [Source](#) [Construction announcement](#)

[2] Viktor Genel, HedgeCone, 2013. Material and geometric record of the retained original construction. [Source](#)

[3] Viktor Genel, Deutilization and the Duchamp Legacy, Theory essay, October 7, 2026. Principal conceptual reference. [Source](#)

[4] Nancy Lim, Marcel Duchamp's Readymades Celebrating the Centennial, Museum of Modern Art, January 15, 2016. [Source](#)

[5] Philadelphia Museum of Art, Marcel Duchamp and the Fountain Scandal, March 27, 2017. Historical account and reproduction of the 1917 Blind Man defense. [Source](#)

[6] Viktor Genel, HedgeCone Rad at Lawn on D, July 19, 2015. [Source](#)

[7] Viktor Genel, TEDx Somerville was awesome, September 28, 2015, with linked photographic account dated October 5. Patrick McDonagh, TEDxSomerville Reinvent, The Somerville Times, October 7, 2015, pp. 1, 12, corroborates the September 27 event at Tufts. [Source](#) [Artist's photographs](#) [The Somerville Times](#)

[8] Viktor Genel, HedgeCone Rad goes to NYC, May 9, 2016. BWAC shared the artist's installation account on May 7 for Wide Open 7. [Source](#) [BWAC installation account](#)

[9] RISCA, 2020 State Employee Art Exhibit at the Atrium Gallery, published schedule February 24–May 1, 2020. Viktor Genel, exhibition takedown account and photographs, July 10, 2020. [Source](#) [July 10 takedown record](#)

[10] Viktor Genel, firsthand clarifications communicated October 8, 2026: retained HedgeCone identity; canceled April 7 reception; intrusion during closure; recovery of the detached yellow component. These recollections supplement the public record; the date of the intrusion remains unspecified.