FRANCIS PICABIA

OUR HEADS ARE ROUND SO OUR THOUGHTS CAN CHANGE DIRECTION

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KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

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DANS L' ÉTAT DE NUDITÉ

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FRANCIS PICABIA

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ANNE UMLAND and CATHÉRINE HUG

with essays by
GEORGE BAKER | CAROLE BOULBÈS | MASHA CHLENOVA
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FOREWORD

The exhibition *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction* and its accompanying catalogue continue a long-standing tradition at The Museum of Modern Art and the Kunsthaus Zürich: the organization of major exhibitions dedicated to pivotal figures within the history of modern art. Among the great artists of the past century, the audacious, irreverent, and profoundly influential Francis Picabia (1879–1953) remains largely unfamiliar to the general public. This is the first comprehensive survey of his work ever to be mounted in the United States, and the first in Switzerland in more than thirty years. We are delighted to provide the opportunity for our twenty-first-century audiences to experience and evaluate Picabia's achievements at a moment when his freewheeling and remarkably heterogeneous oeuvre carries fresh relevance for contemporary artists today.

Francis Picabia extends a fruitful partnership between The Museum of Modern Art and the Kunsthaus Zürich that began with the co-organization of the important centennial retrospective *Alberto Giacometti* in 2001, and that has continued, most recently, with the New York presentation of *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, a project organized in Zurich that had at its core key works from the exceptional Dada collections of both museums. The present, collaboratively conceived retrospective of Picabia's work is scheduled, as was *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Dada movement in Zurich. It celebrates Picabia as one of Dada's defining artists while situating his works from these pivotal years within the much larger arc of his decades-long career. It is especially gratifying that our partnership allows us to present this full-scale survey of the artist's production in both Zurich and New York, two cities that played important roles in his life and art. Picabia made a number of catalytic visits to New York, beginning with his much publicized stay at the time of the Armory Show in 1913, and he spent extended periods of time in Switzerland before, during, and after Dada; his 1919 encounter in Zurich with the Dada impresario Tristan Tzara had profound consequences for both men.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the many lenders to the exhibition, listed on the page opposite, and to others who have contributed to its realization, listed seperately in the curators' acknowledgments. We must, however, acknowledge a special debt to our colleagues at the Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, Paris, in particular Bernard Blistène and Brigitte Léal, for their unstinting generosity. That we have been able to mount this exhibition is due not only to their enthusiastic support but also to the great goodwill of the Comité Picabia, in particular Beverley and Pierre Calté, as well as William and Virginia Camfield. Without their expert advice and sympathetic cooperation, we could not have realized such an ambitious undertaking. Projects of this size and scope are, by necessity, expensive endeavors. We extend our great appreciation to all those who made possible this exhibition's presentation at The Museum of Modern Art and the Kunsthaus Zürich.

We warmly acknowledge the curators of the exhibition, Anne Umland, The Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, and Cathérine Hug, Curator at the Kunsthaus Zürich; as well as Talia Kwartler, Curatorial Assistant, and Masha Chlenova, former Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, and Esther Braun-Kalberer, Exhibition Organizer, Kunsthaus Zürich. The contributions of Natalie Dupêcher, Rachel Silveri, and Kirsty Dootson, Museum Research Consortium Fellows at MoMA, were essential to the realization of the exhibition and its complex catalogue. Special thanks are due to the entire staffs at The Museum of Modern Art and the Kunsthaus Zürich, virtually all of whom have contributed directly or indirectly to this expansive undertaking.

GLENN D. LOWRY
Director
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

CHRISTOPH BECKER
Director
Kunsthaus Zürich

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To organize an exhibition that might do justice to the extraordinary range of Picabia's art would not be possible without the generous assistance and collaboration of many individuals, to whom we offer our most profound appreciation. Our deepest gratitude must go to the many lenders, both public and private, listed on page 6, without whom this exhibition could not have been realized.

The thoughtful and enthusiastic support of the members of the Comité Picabia—Beverley and Pierre Calté and William and Virginia Camfield, as well as advisors Candace Clements and Arnauld Pierre—has been indispensible. Beverley Calté, in particular, has been a tireless ally. She and William Camfield opened their archives, patiently answered innumerable questions, and helped locate key images and essential loans. We are grateful, too, for the faith placed in us by Picabia's heirs, including Armelle Bailly-Cowell, her daughters Sophie-Tifaine Bailly-Cowell and Gillian-Joy Bailly-Cowell; and Anne and Claire Berest.

Artworks lent by institutions and private collectors across Europe and North America join works from the collections of The Museum of Modern Art and the Kunsthaus Zürich in our presentation of this comprehensive survey of Picabia's career. We especially thank: Janne Sirén and Cathleen Chaffee, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; James Rondeau, Stephanie D'Alessandro, Suzanne Folds McCullagh, and Mark Pascale, Art Institute of Chicago; Jay Fisher, Christine Dietze, and Katy Rothkopf, Baltimore Museum of Art; E. C. Schroeder, Nancy Kuhl, and Kevin Repp, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Isabelle Diu and Marie-Dominique Nobécourt Mutarelli, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris; Lynn Zelevansky, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Bernard Blistène, Brigitte Léal, and Jonas Storsve, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, Paris; Erik Näslund, Dansmuseet – Museum Rolf de Maré Stockholm; Bill Michel and Richard A. Born, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Virginia Bertone, GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino; Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Marcia Reed, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Lynn Gumpert and Michèle M. Wong, Grey Art Gallery, New York University; Ann Philbin and Connie Butler, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; James S. Snyder and Ronit Sorek, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Bernhard Mendes Bürgi, Kunstmuseum Basel; Josef Helfenstein and Thomas Rhoads, The Menil Collection, Houston; Thomas B. Campbell and Sheena Wagstaff, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Daniel Birnbaum and Iris Müller-Westermann, Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Colin B. Bailey and Frances Barulich, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; Carole Hyza, Musée-bibliothèque PAB, Alès, France; Fabrice Hergott and Choghakate Kazarian, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Guy Tosatto and Isabelle Varloteaux, Musée de Grenoble; Jean-Paul Monery, Musée de L'Annonciade, Saint-Tropez; Claude Ghez De Castelnuovo, Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva; John W. Smith and Jan Howard, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence; Sjarel Ex and Sandra Kisters, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Yilmaz Dziewior and Stephan Diederich, Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Earl A. Powell III and Harry Cooper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Yuri Long and Lamia Doumato, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.; Marc Mayer, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Anthony W. Marx, New York Public Library; Philip Rylands, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Timothy Rub, Matthew Affron, and Joseph Rishel, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Neil Benezra, Gary Garrels, and Janet Bishop, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Richard Armstrong, Nancy Spector, and Susan Davidson, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Christiane Lange and Ina Conzen, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; Nicholas Serota, Tate; and Jock Reynolds and Pamela Franks, Yale University Art Gallery. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the private individuals, collections, foundations, and galleries who have graciously lent works: Timothy Baum, Lawrence B. Benenson, Merrill C. Berman, Lucien Bilinelli, The Bluff Collection, Broere Charitable Foundation, Eric Decelle, Paul Destribats, David and Marcel Fleiss, Friedrich Christian Flick, Daniel Frachon, Galerie Hervé Bize, James Geier, Jeff and Mei Sze Greene, Hall Collection, Hauser & Wirth Collection, Jon and Joanne Hendricks, Mark Kelman, Jon Kilik, Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis, Michael Werner Gallery, Marianne and Pierre Nahon, Neumann Family Collection, Ales Ortuzar, Alexander S. C. Rower, Marc and Sylvie Sator, Julian Schnabel, Natalie and Léon Seroussi, the Estates of Emily and Jerry Spiegel, Charles Szwajcer, Bruce and Robbi Toll, Hélène Trintignan, Peter Uhlmann, Inge and Philip van den Hurk, and several anonymous lenders.

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FRANCIS PICABIA: AN INTRODUCTION

ANNE UMLAND

"What I like is to invent, to imagine, to make of myself at every moment a new man, and then, to forget him, to forget everything."[1] So wrote the artist, poet, and provocateur Francis Picabia, almost a century ago. He was forty-three at the time, with some twenty years of his career behind him and, although he could hardly have known it then, some thirty still to go. His words connect an obsession with self-reinvention to a will to self-erasure, inflected with the profound nihilism that colored his worldview, hinting at a few of the many reasons why, as a subject, he remains slippery. The body of work Picabia left behind performs similarly, in its incessant shape-shifting and self-negating strategies. It ranges widely and wildly, from painting to publishing, representation to abstraction, seduction to repulsion, encompassing as well writing, theater, film, and the organization of elaborate fetes and galas. Considered as a whole, Picabia's oeuvre testifies to the artist's lifelong success in inventing new selves, only to consign them repeatedly to oblivion. So well did he succeed that history has tended to follow suit. Today his name is far less familiar to the general public than those of modern art's well-known "father figures," Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, who were Picabia's contemporaries and peers.[2]

Among artists, however, Picabia's practice and persona have been deeply influential, and since the late 1960s, art historians, museum curators, collectors, gallerists, critics, and other art-world insiders have increasingly taken note of his remarkable body of work. This is in no small part due to the fact that his oeuvre's hybrid character makes it possible to describe him as "proto" just about anything: Pop art, Conceptual art, appropriation art, and so-called bad painting are but a few of the important postwar artistic tendencies for which Picabia provides significant precedents. Duchamp, who was Picabia's longtime friend and Dada co-conspirator during the 1910s and early 1920s, once described Picabia's career as a "kaleidoscopic series of art experiences" that were "hardly related one to another in their external appearances" but which were "marked by a strong personality."[3] Within this introduction as well as in the object-focused essays that follow in this catalogue, complemented by a chronology that details the expansive nature of Picabia's production, we set out to provide an overview of this "kaleidoscopic" artistic legacy, which is as consistently inconsistent as it is stylistically manifold. A review of important posthumous exhibitions of Picabia's work and selected interviews with artists and organizers of past Picabia shows situate the present project within a continuum of efforts to reevaluate the oeuvre in toto. In this case, we have done so by asking our authors to focus on particular groups of works made at particular moments, with the intent of allowing the specifics of the works themselves and the larger art-historical, biographical, institutional, and/or political issues that frame and shape them to define the obstreperous sweep of Picabia's wide-ranging output.

As noted by the artist Peter Fischli, co-organizer of the last major Picabia retrospective, held in Paris at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2002: "[E]very art has its own mission in the time when it is received, and every exhibition that is made should enable a new reading of the work, suited to a different time."[4] The last Picabia retrospective to be held in Zurich, where the current show will originate, was in 1984, already some thirty-plus years ago; in the United States, this will be the first major Picabia retrospective since 1970, and the only one in the country thus far to chart the full career. This lends urgency to the present endeavor, in a way that relates not only to our own time but to our geographical place. The reading of Picabia's work that we would like to activate for our twenty-first-century audiences in these two cities, both of which played important roles in the artist's history, is that Picabia's career matters *as a whole*. We believe, at this particular historical moment, as the stark oppositions that have been so central to our received histories of twentieth-century art and modernism continue to unravel, that the discordant sum of Picabia's lifetime achievement has a heightened relevance, particularly in its capacity to make us think differently about the history of modern art, in a way that is more open-ended, messier, nonbinary, one that challenges distinctions between good and bad, progressive and regressive, sincerity and parody, high art and kitsch. On a parallel track, a full survey of Picabia's precedent offers contemporary artists what critic Dave Hickey has described as a "resonant, multivalent wild card" in its stylistic and strategic multiplicity, continuing Picabia's long legacy as an artists' artist in terms congruent to those of our hierarchy-exploding digital age.[5]

Francis Picabia was born on January 22, 1879, of a Cuban-born father descended from Spanish nobility and a wealthy French bourgeois mother. It may or may not be significant that when he died, some seventy-four years later, in 1953, it was in the same house where he was born, although he had traveled far and wide and moved many times in between. Notorious to this day for his love of fast cars and a long succession of women, Picabia had no objection to—and, in fact, encouraged—those who placed emphasis on his quasi-exotic Spanish heritage, despite his French citizenship and passport. It is also worth mentioning that, among early twentieth-century avant-garde artists, Picabia was singularly wealthy. This facilitated his mobility, literally and metaphorically, and his freedom to function as a gadfly, in no uncertain terms.

In early 1918, as World War I continued to ravage Europe, Picabia moved to neutral Switzerland. It was there, two years earlier, that the Dada movement had been launched in Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire. Picabia was not present on that occasion, but the year after his 1918 arrival, he met up with the young Dada impresario Tristan Tzara, and from that moment on, the epithet Dadaist is the one that has remained the most securely attached to his name. This notwithstanding his very publicly proclaimed break with the movement in May 1921 and his many artistic lives before and after Dada: as a successful after-the-fact Impressionist, as a celebrated early abstract painter, as an artist admired and collected by the Surrealist leader André Breton, as the pioneering creator of a type of pictorial layering known as Transparencies, as a photo-based realist, and as a post–World War II participant in Art Informel. As this list suggests, the material and iconographic range of Picabia's oeuvre is staggering, and that is before taking into account his prolific output as a writer and the more performative dimensions of his work. Staggering, too, is his career's dissonance. Unlike the prodigious stylistic pluralism of his almost exact contemporary Picasso, Picabia's style-switching involves extremes that exude—and provoke—skepticism and doubt. With Picasso, no matter how different one of his paintings might look from another, the identity of the author and his "pride in his own irrepressible inventiveness," as Elizabeth Cowling has put it, are never in question.[6] Picasso was a believer in his own virtuosity and his godlike ability to reimagine the world. Picabia, simply put, was not.[7]

Picasso was, in fact, two years younger than Picabia, yet in many ways he remains the more old-fashioned artist of the two. Unlike Picabia, Picasso was unwilling and/or uninterested in crossing the divide that separates objective from nonobjective painting. He famously rejected abstraction, as well as any readymade, mechanical, or rote means of making art, particularly those related to photography.[8] This isn't to say that Picasso didn't make

1. Francis Picabia, "Francis Merci!," *Littérature*, nouvelle série, no. 8 (January 1923): 16–17; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits critiques*, ed. Carole Boulbès (Paris: Mémoire du Livre, 2005), 380.
2. This despite the excellent monographs published by William A. Camfield in 1979 (*Francis Picabia: His Art, Life, and Times* [Princeton: Princeton University Press]) and Maria Lluïsa Borràs in 1985 (*Picabia*, trans. Kenneth Lyons [New York: Rizzoli]), and an extensive body of literature dedicated to the artist. For comprehensive bibliographies and exhibition histories, see William A. Camfield, Beverley Calté, Candace Clements, and Arnauld Pierre, eds., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, *1898–1914* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2014), 385–412; and Suzanne Pagé and Gérard Audinet, eds., *Francis Picabia: Singulier idéal*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2002), 448–461.
3. Marcel Duchamp, "Francis Picabia," in *Collection of the Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art 1920* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, published for the Associates in Fine Arts, 1950), 4.
4. Peter Fischli, interview with Cathérine Hug, in this volume.
5. David Hickey, "Francis Picabia: His Legendary Illegitimacy," in *Francis Picabia: Late Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York: Michael Werner, 2000), n.p.
6. Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), 15.
7. A 1927 review of a solo exhibition of Picabia's works at the Galerie Van Leer makes a similar point, describing Picasso's "inconstancy" as "an unerring development of his thought," in comparison to Picabia's, whose "inconstancy comes from his uncertainty. Hence his perpetual fluctuations." See "Les Expositions à Paris," *Cahiers d'Art* 2, nos. 7–8 (November 1927): 4; translated in Borràs, *Picabia*, 292.
8. For an illuminating discussion of Picasso's "horrified" reaction to "the idea that abstraction, mechanomorphism, and photography would soon supplant Cubism," see Yve-Alain Bois, "Picasso the Trickster," in *Picasso Harlequin: 1917–1937*, ed. Yve-Alain Bois, exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 2008), 28; and Rosalind E. Krauss, "Picasso/Pastiche," in *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), especially 112–154.

Fig. 1. Francis Picabia. *Espagnole* (*Spanish Woman*). Hand-tinted illustration published in Marie de la Hire, *Francis Picabia* (Paris: Galerie de la Cible, 1920), n.p.

Fig. 2. Francis Picabia. *Petite solitude au milieu des soleils* (*A Little Solitude in the Midst of Suns*). Hand-tinted illustration published in Marie de la Hire, *Francis Picabia* (Paris: Galerie de la Cible, 1920), n.p.

use of photographs, as tools, or employ readymade materials in the making of his artworks. It is well known that he did. Yet for him, such strategies were always a matter of acting upon his sources of inspiration—whether African or Oceanic objects, the works of other artists, or scraps retrieved from the dustbin—and transforming them into something an "I" made and that declares itself to be highly original. With Picabia, by contrast, what Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has called the "specter of derivativeness" and "historical secondariness" hovers over his work from the start.[9] From his first Impressionist canvases, many of which are argued to have been based on postcards, to his pilfering from things as varied as technical drawings and diagrams, the writings of Nietzsche, highbrow art-historical references and lowbrow girlie magazines, Picabia's practice of parody, quotation, and appropriation points in a decidedly different direction from Picasso. It introduces the idea that reproduction, replication, and outright plagiarism can all be considered as generative strategies. This attitude firmly aligned him with the younger artists and poets who were at the heart of the Dada movement, as opposed to Picasso, whose worldview remained rooted in nineteenth-century concepts of heroic individuality and creativity.

In a prescient article written in 1921, the linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson argued that Dada was the first self-conscious art movement, in the sense that it critiqued existing conventions and formulas rather than inventing them, and that its defining strategy was not to be original but to be reactive.[10] Dada was also the first art movement to pursue itinerancy in aesthetic, social, and ideological terms. Picabia and Duchamp, in particular, shared a nomadic attitude and a resistance to fixed positions that were consonant with Dada's moment of birth, amid the ashes produced by the hate-filled nationalisms and rigid ideologies that had sparked the First World War. It is surely not by chance that many of Picabia's most aggressive statements about the need for constant change were made during and immediately subsequent to his intense involvement with the Dada movement, particularly as manifested in Paris between 1920 and 1921. The range of Picabia's activities during these years multiplied, as he and his fellow Dadaists waged an all-out assault on the morality, art, religion, and bourgeois culture they

Fig. 3. Marcel Duchamp. *L.H.O.O.Q.* 1919. Rectified readymade: pencil on reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, 7 3/4 × 4 7/8" (19.7 × 12.4 cm). Private collection

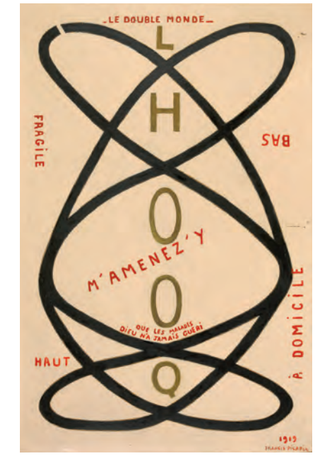


Fig. 4. Francis Picabia. *Le Double Monde* (*The Double World*). 1919. Enamel paint and oil on board, 52 × 33 1/2" (132 × 85 cm). Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Gift, 2003

deemed responsible for the war. Picabia himself made provocative statements to the press, published journals, wrote manifestos, staged demonstrations and salon interventions, and orchestrated solo exhibitions of his work in various Paris galleries, including one at the relatively obscure Galerie de la Cible (also known as Galerie Povolozky) in December 1920, bringing the inaugural year of Paris Dada to a close.

The Galerie de la Cible exhibition is noteworthy for, among other things, marking what is believed to be the first public display of Picabia's quasi-Ingresque, sloe-eyed Espagnoles, a series of figurative works likely begun in Barcelona as early as 1916 or 1917 (fig. 1).[11] Judging from the exhibition's catalogue, which took the form of a monograph published to coincide with the show, and from contemporary reviews, only a few of his mechanomorphic paintings (fig. 2), which are the type of picture more often associated with his avant-garde Dada years, were exhibited in the show, where they were outnumbered not only by Espagnoles but by the artist's earlier Impressionist canvases and nudes. This is an important reminder that even—or, more accurately, especially—at the height of the Dada movement, Picabia worked in multiple visually discordant modes.[12] Art historians writing in the 1960s, such as Michel Sanouillet and Marc Le Bot, suggested that Picabia's motivations for exhibiting the Espagnoles and other nominally regressive or retrograde works must have been purely financial—how else to explain the coexistence of these often exquisite, almost cloyingly sweet, stereotypical images of Spanish women (pl. 92, for example) with works such as *L'Enfant carburateur* (*The Child Carburetor*) (pl. 54) that defined new aesthetic norms?[13]

The reactions of some contemporary critics to Picabia's Galerie de la Cible exhibition seem to support this assertion: several reviewers proclaimed their relief at the return of the "good" Picabia, as opposed to the painter of mechanical provocations.[14] To state the obvious, however, what constitutes a "good" Picabia versus a "bad" one is entirely subjective. Picabia's simultaneous display of Espagnoles and modernist mechanical paintings foregrounds the degree to which such judgments as "good" or "bad" are dependent on the taste and values of the viewer, who is consistently and deliberately placed in the hot seat by the artist's works. L.H.O.O.Q.—these initials appear in multiple works by Picabia and Duchamp from this moment (figs. 3, 4). Read aloud, one by one, in French, they translate as, "She's horny." Pronounced as a single word together in English, they sound

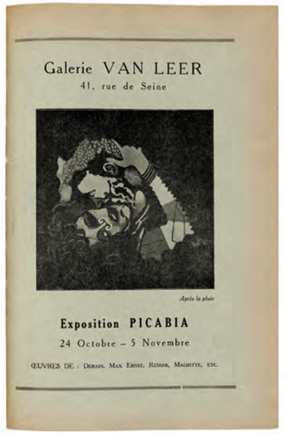
9. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting," *October* 16 (Spring 1981): 60.
10. Roman Jakobson, "Dada" [1921], reprinted in *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 34–40.
11. See Picabia's illustration of a toreador, published in *391*, no. 6 (July 1917): n.p. Michel Sanouillet claims that Picabia began working on his Espagnoles in 1916 (Sanouillet, *Picabia* [Paris: L'Œil du temps, 1964], 32). Arnauld Pierre suggests that the Espagnole project was not begun until sometime around the end of the First World War: "It is thus tempting… to estimate that the Espagnoles were not begun before the period (c. 1917) when they would find their full and complete justification, namely in the nationalist context of the return to Ingres in the wartime and immediately postwar years" (Pierre, *Francis Picabia: La Peinture sans aura* [Paris: Gallimard, 2002], 196).
12. Indeed, as MoMA painting conservator Michael Duffy has pointed out, this occurs sometimes even within the same work: witness *M'Amenez-y* (pl. 56) with its evenly applied two-toned background and precise curves partially slathered over in slapdash applications of Ripolin. Duffy, email correspondence with the author, February 16, 2016.
13. See Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et "391,"* vol. 2 (Paris: Le Terrain vague, 1966), 126; and Marc Le Bot, *Francis Picabia et la crise des valeurs figuratives, 1900–1925* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1968), 177, 179.
14. G. de P., "Exposition Francis Picabia," *Paris Journal*, December 24, 1920; in Fonds Francis Picabia, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, Albums de presse, vol. 4, p. 4.

like a French-accented directive to "look." Picabia's promulgation of what is at once a wry erotic pun and, for Anglophones, an invitation to pay attention in works that mount a direct attack on painting and its givens while simultaneously pursuing other works, such as the Espagnoles, that seem to celebrate tradition forces us to think about art and our perceptions of it. Moreover, for all the ways in which the Espagnoles plausibly accommodate bourgeois taste, they also, as art historian Arnauld Pierre has argued, offer an ironic take on the interwar French fixation on the art of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Proponents of the conservative *retour à l'ordre* ("return to order") pointed to Ingres's art as proof of the superiority of traditional values and *le dessin français*, the noble lineage of French academic drawing, which Picabia might be said to have irreverently applied to his sentimental Spanish subjects in an ironic Dada jest.[15]

The art market and the arbitrary character of its appraisals were particular targets of Picabia and Duchamp both during and after the Dada years. This did not, however, preclude their direct engagement with the market itself. In March 1926, Duchamp staged, undoubtedly with his friend's complicity, a major sale of Picabia's works purportedly from his own (Duchamp's) collection. The result amounted to a mid-career retrospective that provided the Paris press with the opportunity to analyze the entirety of Picabia's oeuvre for the first time. The catalogue lists eighty works ranging in date from Picabia's early Impressionist canvases to his most recent "Ripolin" Monster paintings and Collages.[16] The words of critic Stéphane Manier capture the way Picabia's work troubled, and would continue to trouble, commonly accepted definitions of beauty, quality, and taste: "He paints outside every conception of Beauty and Ugly, ignoring Good and Bad."[17] Picabia was interviewed on the occasion of the Duchamp sale and used the opportunity to express his profound ambivalence toward painting: "What would give me the greatest pleasure," the artist said, "would be to invent without painting. The facture of a picture hardly amuses me, and painting bores me."[18] Despite this, Picabia continued to paint—indeed, for the rest of his life. This decisively split his trajectory from that of Duchamp, who made his last painting, *Tu m'* (p. 288, fig. 4), in 1918. Picabia's identity, by contrast, is more complicated and conflicted: he is the great anti-painter who kept on painting, unwilling or perhaps unable, even, to give it up.

Picabia's mixed feelings toward the medium were shared by many of the erstwhile Dadaists who joined André Breton's Surrealist movement in 1924. (Picabia, it must be said, was not among them.) Informed by their interest in the theories of Karl Marx and the egalitarian ideals of communism, the Surrealist poets damned painting as fatefully individualistic, the expensive product of genius, and the category of art most deeply implicated in a booming commodity market as the Roaring Twenties proceeded to unfold. The Surrealists also, on some level, in the wake of photography's advance, believed painting to be dead, defunct, and outdated, the emblem of an old-fashioned tradition in which they had lost faith. At the same time, some of them—none more notably than Breton in a series of essays titled "Surrealism and Painting"—sought to justify the continued coexistence of painting and their revolutionary movement: to pursue it as a practice was permissible, encouraged even, provided that it function as an agent of aggression, a subversive weapon, a tool enlisted in the fight against the so-called reality of the bourgeois and the status quo.[19]

Among the artists Breton concerned himself with in "Surrealism and Painting," he made clear that he believed Picabia represented an exemplary case, even though the older artist had refused to join Breton's group and even ridiculed it. "I shall continue, despite everything, to count on Francis Picabia," Breton wrote. "[He] has experienced a particularly violent feeling of disgust at the commercial transactions to which every work of art is subject today [and…] he has thwarted such maneuvers in regard to his own work with the greatest


Galerie VAN LEER
41, rue de Seine

Après la pluie

Exposition PICABIA
24 Octobre – 5 Novembre
ŒUVRES DE : DERAIN, MAX ERNST, RENOIR, MAGRITTE, ETC.

Fig. 5. Advertisement for Galerie van Leer featuring Picabia's *Les Amoureux (Après la pluie)*, published in *La Révolution surréaliste*, nos. 9–10 (October 1, 1927): n.p.

possible energy."[20] Yet speaking of "commercial transactions," Breton himself had purchased several paintings by Picabia at the 1926 Duchamp sale; in fact one of these, *Les Amoureux (Après la pluie)* (*The Lovers [After the Rain]*) (pl. 148), was featured in a full-page advertisement for Galerie van Leer in *La Révolution surréaliste* (fig. 5)—in the very same October 1927 issue in which Breton's discussion of Picabia and his successful resistance to market forces first appeared. As such, this painting presents an interesting case study in relation to the specifics of Picabia's anti-painting painting practice in the 1920s, in the years after Dada. How and in what ways can it be considered to have "thwarted" the market system if, in the end, it was sold? What were Picabia's tactics? Did they critique capitalist culture, or were they complicit with it? The specifics of the facture of *Les Amoureux* and of other mid-1920s works included in the Duchamp sale perhaps offer a series of clues, or insights, into the ways in which Picabia might be said to have determinedly *undermined* the value of his paintings, thereby earning the approbation of an avant-garde collector such as Breton.

Scholar William Camfield was among the first to suggest that Picabia had revisited a number of the paintings included in the Duchamp sale, subjecting them to what might be called "improvements" using the type of commercial enamel paints often generically referred to by the brand name Ripolin.[21] Such paints were formulated to be easily applied, usually to things like interior walls or radiators, and to provide even, opaque coverage. Duchamp remarked in the preface he wrote for the 1926 sale catalogue that Picabia's "love of invention" and of "the new" had led him to paint with Ripolin, perhaps a tongue-in-cheek reference to the very particular way Picabia, beginning in the 1920s, used commercial enamels: to amend, adjust, cover over, and cancel out older works.[22] In a painting such as *Optophone* [II] (pl. 123), the pink and green Ripolin interventions are self-evident; they visually declare themselves to have been applied, like graffiti, over the relatively precise black concentric circles of an earlier "optical" work.[23] The kitsch materials such as the macaroni noodles or drinking straws that Picabia adhered to his contemporaneous Collage works perform a comparably disruptive, debasing function, earning them praise several years later in Surrealist Louis Aragon's paean to anti-painting, *La Peinture au défi* (*A Challenge to Painting*) (1930).[24]

In *Les Amoureux (Après la pluie)*, by contrast, Picabia covered virtually the entire surface with Ripolin, completely obliterating its earlier state(s). Although it is easy to discern with a naked eye that *Les Amoureux* has

15. Pierre, "Dalmau," in *Francis Picabia: Singulier idéal*, 244–45.
16. Rrose Sélavy [Marcel Duchamp], "80 Picabias," in *Tableaux, aquarelles et dessins par Francis Picabia appartenant à M. Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, March 8, 1926), n.p.
17. Stéphane Manier, "Une Vente Picabia," *Plaisir de vivre*, March 5, 1926; in Fonds Francis Picabia, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, Albums de presse, vol. 12, p. 164.
18. Francis Picabia, "Réponses à Georges Herbier," *La Volonté*, March 4, 1926, 1; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits critiques*, 222.
19. Breton's "Le Surréalisme et la Peinture" was published in *La Révolution surréaliste* in three installments between July 1925 and October 1927. It was published as a book the following year (*Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* [Paris: Gallimard, 1928]).
20. Breton, "Le Surréalisme et la Peinture," in *La Révolution surréaliste*, nos. 9–10 (October 1, 1927): 37; reprinted in Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), 41; and translated in Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 20–21.
21. Per Audinet, "Picabia et la re-peinture," in *Francis Picabia: Singulier idéal*, 92–96. See also Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 189. I am grateful to Michael Duffy for suggesting the word "improvements."
22. Rrose Sélavy [Marcel Duchamp], "80 Picabias," n.p.
23. Ibid.
24. Louis Aragon, *La Peinture au défi*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Goemans, 1930), 25–26.

Fig. 6. Radiograph showing *Grimaldi après la pluie* (c. 1911–12) beneath the surface of *Les Amoureux (Après la pluie)*

Fig. 7. Francis Picabia. *La Feuille de vigne* (*The Fig Leaf*). 1922. Oil and enamel paint on canvas, 78 3/4 × 62 3/16" (200 × 160 cm). Tate. Purchased 1984

a quite thick and complex surface—and is similar in this sense to many of Picabia's post–World War II abstractions—it is only with the aid of technical imaging like radiography and infrared reflectography that we know that this work is painted over an oil painting from more than a decade before, specifically the work listed in the catalogue raisonné as *Grimaldi après la pluie* (*Grimaldi after the Rain*) (fig. 6).[25] Similarly, one of Picabia's large-scale salon paintings of 1922, *La Feuille de vigne* (*The Fig Leaf*) (fig. 7), was painted in Ripolin over an earlier, scandal-provoking mechanical painting titled *Les Yeux chauds* (*Hot Eyes*) (fig. 8).[26] Traces of the prominent circular motifs of *Les Yeux chauds* remain visible, in ghostlike bas-relief, on the surface of *La Feuille de vigne*, although the degree to which such traces would have registered with contemporary audiences is unknown. What is certain is that over-painting, as a form of revision, repudiation, cancellation, and defacement, became a central and singularly important anti-painting tactic of Picabia's, one that could be said to challenge commodification and consumption by declaring earlier states of his work to be worthless, not to mention rendering those prior states thoroughly unmarketable, and it seems entirely possible, if not provable, that others would have taken note.[27]

Consider, for example, the case of the younger Surrealist painter Joan Miró, seemingly an attentive viewer of Picabia's work from 1920 or perhaps before.[28] In a 1928 interview, Miró spoke of his disdain for the idea of "lasting," describing how, when he completed a work, it was only a point of departure for what he would do next: "I'd paint it over again, right on top of it. Far from being a finished work, to me it's just a beginning, a hotbed for the idea that's just sprouted, just emerged…Do I have to remind you that what I detest most is lasting?"[29] Of course, almost any painter at one time or another is likely to have painted over an earlier work, whether for reasons of economy, dissatisfaction, damage, or, as suggested by Miró's words, as a catalyst for the creation of new forms. Among the Dada and Surrealist artists, however, it is not Miró but rather Max Ernst who most actively pursued the practice of over-painting in this latter sense. Ernst's earliest results consist of small-scale

Fig. 8. Picabia's painting *Les Yeux chauds* (*Hot Eyes*) (1921), over which the artist painted *La Feuille de vigne*

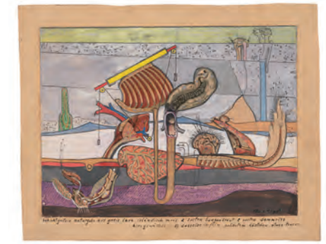


Fig. 9. Max Ernst. *Schichtgestein naturgabe aus gneis lava isländisch moos…* (*Stratified Rocks, Nature's Gift of Gneiss Lava Iceland Moss…*). 1920. Gouache and pencil on printed paper on board, 7 1/2 × 9 1/2" (19.1 × 24.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase, 1937

works on paper, in which the artist used gouache to transform encyclopedia illustrations and other didactic images into otherworldly, proto-Surrealist dreamscapes and narratives (fig. 9, for example).

With Picabia, however, the stakes are different. His layerings participate in his nihilism and self-negation in a way that Ernst's do not. Also unlike Ernst, whose acts of over-painting highlight as much as conceal the features of his sources, Picabia's confound legibility almost to the point of incoherence. And as Picabia would demonstrate as well, transparency and opacity prove to be opposite sides of the same coin. In 1919–20, with his Dada "masterpiece" *Danse de Saint-Guy* (*St. Vitus's Dance*), known today only through a photograph (p. 4) and a late-1940s reconstruction (pl. 74), Picabia created a work that could literally be seen through, one whose interior composition is almost entirely dependent on its external and unpredictable surroundings, in a manner similar to Duchamp's use of glass in works such as *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* (1918) or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915–23). In his Transparencies of the late 1920s, Picabia reprised the real-world string lines of *Danse de Saint-Guy* in fluid paint, creating curvilinear configurations that have a quasi-calligraphic and deliberately graphic quality (pls. 156–168, for example). Motifs drawn from art history and popular culture are superimposed in complex arrangements that flirt with tropes of decoration, cinema, and temporality but which intentionally fail to add up or resolve themselves into any one, easily decipherable narrative or composition.

During the 1930s, Picabia continued to pursue strategies of layering, masking, and superimposition in his painting, interspersed with many other activities; gambling, yachting, and the organization of lavish formal parties on the French Riviera, where he had moved in 1925, were all significant preoccupations during the years leading up to World War II. Picabia's paintings from this time demonstrate a keen interest in process and experimental materials that belies his own statements about being indifferent to surface facture, and the

25. See Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 327. I am grateful to conservator Michael Duffy and our colleagues at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris and the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France for sharing their research with me.
26. Annette King, Joyce H. Townsend, Bronwyn Ormsby, and Gwénaëlle Gautier, "The Use of Ripolin by Picabia in *The Fig Leaf* (1922)," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 52, no. 4 (2013): 246–257.
27. Audinet, "Picabia et la re-peinture," 93; and in conversation with the author, October 17, 2013.
28. See, for example, Joan Miró to J. F. Ràfols, November 18, 1920; translated in Miró, *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Margit Rowell, trans. Paul Auster and Patricia Mathews (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 75.
29. Joan Miró, quoted in Fransesc Trabal, "Una conversa amb Joan Miró," *La Publicitat* (Barcelona) 50 (July 14, 1928); translated in Miró, *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews*, 98.

statements of others who characterize him as a proto-Conceptual artist indifferent to the making of things or who attribute his turn to unusual materials simply as a function of the difficulties in finding paint supplies in the south of France. In works such as *Le Clown Fratellini* (*Fratellini Clown*) (pl. 178), Picabia applied multiple coats of green-tinted varnishes to create a work that is as willfully repulsive as it is difficult to look away from, and one that is impossible not to read as symptomatic of the troubling malaise and sense of creeping doom that was spreading throughout Europe, as the threat of fascism and totalitarian ideologies loomed on the world stage.

Picabia lived through two world wars, during which the once proud continent of Europe suffered unprecedented material and cultural devastation and the mass murder of its citizens. He was visiting Switzerland when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, marking the outbreak of World War II. His anguish over world events is evident in letters written from Rubigen to his former partner and close friend Germaine Everling:

> [E]vents seem to be getting worse and worse. The fire is lit from dawn yesterday, the ordeal of the war of nerves is finished, now a tragic lunacy is taking over. It's a thing to be feared. The only unknown factor today is Italy's attitude. Maybe hostilities will be confined to the German-Polish front, but if this is not so it will mean the end of Europe…I spend my time thinking that this is going to end, that it cannot last any longer, that it is a nightmare and that I must wake up if I want it to end. We should all have emigrated across the Atlantic so as not to see this.[30]

Ultimately, however, Picabia and his companion, Olga Mohler, seem to have decided to remain in Europe, returning to the south of France by October. In July 1940, following Germany's invasion of France, they found themselves living under the authority of General Philippe Pétain's puppet regime, centered in Vichy, some 400 miles to the north of their home in Golfe-Juan.

Picabia continued to work during the Occupation and began a new series of photo-based realist paintings (pls. 182–195, for example), which superficially, at least, appear to represent one of his more astonishing volte-faces.[31] Created by an artist who was, by that point, in his early sixties, these works combine kitsch subjects, popular culture, and politics in an inflammatory mix. On the one hand, their mimetic, naturalist style seems to flirt dangerously with that of artists officially sanctioned by the Third Reich.[32] And on the other, they foreground Picabia's problematic status as a political subject. Born into a Europe that not only tolerated an endemic anti-Semitism but fueled the rise of Hitler, Picabia was not one to refrain from making offensive anti-Semitic statements.[33] He is likewise on record with remarks that are pro-Mussolini, anti-Lenin, and seemingly pro-Pétain, although often, as when he wrote praising the "youth" of the then eighty-four-year-old Pétain, the sincerity or irony of his statements is impossible to ascertain.[34] The fact that he was arrested by French authorities in October 1944 on charges of being a collaborator does not help matters, for those of us who would prefer that artists have morals and ethics as exemplary as their art.[35] Although Picabia was eventually released, never to be tried, the accusations of collaboration continued to haunt him during the ugly period of *épuration* ("purge") that followed the Liberation.[36] He left the south of France in June 1945, never to return again.

The crucial question to consider in this context, however, is less whether or not Picabia was justly accused as a collaborator, but rather: how does our knowledge of Picabia as a political subject inform our reading of his wartime works? Does it change the way we perceive his achievements? What conclusions, at our twenty-first-

Fig. 10. Valeria Ellanskaya from the Casino de Paris, published in *Paris-Magazine*, no. 57 (May 1936): n.p.

30. Francis Picabia to Germaine Everling, September 3, 1939; translation adjusted from Borràs, *Picabia*, 394.
31. Regarding these works as a continuation of Picabia's Dada practice, see Arnauld Pierre, "Un Modernisme 'Popiste': Les *Nus* de Picabia," in *Les Clefs d'une passion*, ed. Suzanne Pagé and Béatrice Parent, exh. cat. (Paris: Fondation Louis Vuitton, 2015), 214–217.
32. As suggested in Yve-Alain Bois, "Francis Picabia: From Dada to Pétain," trans. Thomas Repensek, *October* 30 (Autumn 1984): 123n6.
33. In a 1922 article, for example, Picabia writes: "It is true that my French and Spanish origins are from old Latin races which will soon disappear and be replaced by the children of Einstein, Israelites with pretty faces" ("Jusqu'à un certain point," *Comœdia*, April 16, 1922, 1; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits critiques*, 124). More than two decades later, when Picabia learned that his studio in Golfe-Juan "was taken by some Jews" following the liberation of France, he complained to Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia: "These are vulgar individuals, dirty egoists who think only of their financial interest…In a human society that promises us communism, there will be no place for what makes you and I unique" (Francis Picabia to Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, c. 1945; in the Département des manuscrits, Bibliothèque nationale de France).
34. Francis Picabia, "Jeunesse," *L'Opinion*, March 1941; in Olga Mohler [Picabia], *Für Francis Picabia: das Album von Olga Picabia-Mohler* [1975] (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1981), 125. For excerpts from "Jeunesse" and a selection of other politically charged statements by Picabia, see Bois, "Francis Picabia: From Dada to Pétain," 120–27.
35. "Synthese: Affaire Francis PICABIA," Bureau de la Documentation, Cour de Justice des Alpes-Maritimes et Chambre Civique, Section de Grasse, 2260W 0067, Dossiers de procédures pénales avant about à un non-lieu, "Picabia, Francis, 66 ans." Archives départementales des Alpes-Maritimes, Nice. Although substantive gaps remain in our understanding of Picabia's activities during the Occupation and immediately following the Liberation, newly accessible judicial and police archives in the south of France related to the period, including those referenced here, have helped to form a clearer picture. Séverine Gossart's original research into these archives, published here for the first time, also forms the basis of Rachel Silveri's precise chronological detailing of the charges brought against Picabia and their ultimate dismissal, in "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser: The Life of Francis Picabia," in this volume.
36. "Synthese: Affaire Francis PICABIA."
37. For this suggestion, see the entry on *Le Juif errant* in *Francis Picabia: Singulier idéal*, 374.

century moment, should be drawn? Picabia clearly operated from a position of privilege—as one of many partaking in the normative advantages of not being Jewish—and of extreme individualism, in the Nietzschean sense. His published words make it all too easy to believe that he had no real commitment to any "regime" other than himself. This is not to excuse him but simply to say that with the man, as with the art, words like "heroism" and "progressivism" rest uneasily, as they always had. Picabia is never more, and never less, than a "strong personality," perennially restless, willing to try anything, fueled by nihilism and prone to depression. As such, his works and his attitudes are discomforting. They make us uneasy. As well they should. At the same time, paintings from this moment such as *L'Adoration du veau* (*The Adoration of the Calf*) (pl. 189) and *Le Juif errant* (*The Wandering Jew*) (pl. 188) insist that the political context and historical circumstances surrounding them cannot be ignored. Picabia himself insists on this, particularly in the case of *Le Juif errant*, where he took the unusual step, for works of this period, of inscribing a title and date on the recto.

Le Juif errant was likely made between the enactment of anti-Semitic laws in Vichy in October 1940 and the creation five months later of the Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, the administrative body responsible for implementing those laws.[37] But as seemingly clear as is Picabia's reference to this historical moment on the front of the work itself, what is not clear is how this painting and many of the others the artist made during the war are to be interpreted. Given our knowledge today of the enormity of the German campaign to eradicate the Jews, it is only natural that our reaction upon first encountering a work such as *Le Juif errant* would be horror and disbelief: could Picabia really have taken Jewish displacement as an artistic subject, at the same moment, we now know, that Jews across Europe were being deported and sent to concentration camps? Yet at the same time, the work is hardly a straightforward or transparent document that can be used, like a piece of evidence in a courtroom, to establish Picabia's complicity. What, for instance, should we make of its title, which is based on a popular nineteenth-century anti-Catholic French novel, particularly in light of Picabia's long history of iconoclasm in regard to the Church? Or the fact that the nude woman who appears behind the handsome, red-cloaked man—presumably the titular subject—has origins in a 1936 "nudie" photograph from a soft-core porn magazine (fig. 10), suggesting perhaps that the protagonist is as much a suave ladies' man as

a persecuted refugee? Is *Le Juif errant* sincere or insincere? Romanticizing or callous? Demonizing or idealizing, especially relative to the often heinous depictions of the same subject that were coming out of Germany at the time?[38] Typically, Picabia leaves us with questions, not answers, in works that bear witness to the troubling moral ambiguities of this dark historical moment and the artist's own.

Picabia returned to live in Paris in June 1945. It was a changed city, and he was a changed man relative to the debonair, wealthy, avant-garde artist-cum-provocateur he had been some twenty years prior when he chose to move south for "the sun."[39] Approaching seventy, and, after a jewel theft in his apartment in 1949, relatively impoverished, he nonetheless pursued a vigorous campaign of painting and other artistic activities (fig. 11). The thick, crusty surfaces of the canvases he created and their abstract, frequently erotic motifs bore little visual relation to the photo-based paintings he had produced during the Occupation. They did, however, establish Picabia as a contemporary participant among a younger generation of French abstract painters, many associated with the tendency that came to be called Art Informel. The rediscovery and restoration of two of his great early abstractions, *Udnie* (pl. 22) and *Edtaonisl* (pl. 23), prominently displayed in the hall of honor at the Musée national d'art moderne in May 1948, further established Picabia's importance not only as a current practitioner but as a precursor for the new abstract trends in contemporary French art.

In March 1949, an important retrospective exhibition of Picabia's work opened in Paris at Galerie René Drouin. Titled *491: 50 ans de plaisirs* (*491: 50 Years of Pleasure*), its large-format brochure recalled, in both title and layout (fig. 12), Picabia's important *391* journal, published in Barcelona, New York, Zurich, and Paris between 1917 and 1924 (pls. 41–47, for example). *491* included statements from twenty artists, critics, and friends, and listed more than 130 works ranging in date from 1897 to 1949, with the notable exception of any of the photo-based wartime paintings. Approximately one year later, a much smaller retrospective was held on the other side of the Atlantic, at the Rose Fried Gallery in New York. Billed as including works from 1908 to 1949, this show performed an even more pronounced elision of Picabia's Occupation paintings—and, indeed, all his interwar work. Of the eighteen paintings included, twelve were completed in 1917 or earlier; the remaining six were all from Picabia's most recent series of abstractions known as the Points. The yawning chronological gap between the two bodies of work prompted critic Henry McBride to remark that what Picabia had been doing in between remained "a mystery."[40] According to McBride, Rose Fried said: "'We did not include anything from the long middle period,' but offered no reason why. Nor did she say who 'we' are. Probably the 'we' included Marcel Duchamp, for he was mentioned as assisting with the show…."[41]

In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, artist and critic Michel Seuphor, one of Picabia's postwar champions, linked Picabia's early abstractions and Dada works to his current paintings:

> This year he has burst out like fireworks into a series of astounding canvases that join hands with the fine work of 1913 (*Udnie* and *Edtaonisl*) [after] more than 35 years of seeking, of adventurous life, passionately in love with play and pleasure. The cycle is complete. Picabia has rediscovered the juice of the dada period; the same careless grace. The same painting anti-painting that is real creation. Once again it is he who leads the way to freedom for the youth of today.[42]

In Picabia's Paris retrospective, at least, figurative works from the 1920s and '30s had been shown. In New York, on the heels of the first use of the term "Abstract Expressionism" by Robert Coates in 1946, all the nominally

Fig. 11. Picabia in his studio at 82 rue des Petits-Champs, Paris, c. 1948–49

traditional or "regressive" aspects of Picabia's achievement were simply left out.[43] The thickly painted, unruly surfaced Points were presented as a circling back to Picabia's avant-garde beginnings; his ongoing interest in modes of "realism" and "figuration" did not make the cut. Was it Clement Greenberg's modernism that was to blame or the baggage such works brought with them? It is a question that may yet linger, at least when we reflect upon Picabia's historical reception. But with stark oppositions between avant-garde abstraction and regressive figuration no longer seen as tenable, and with a new appreciation for the complexities of subjecthood and history, its relevance has faded, and today we are ready to look at these works with fresh eyes.

The idea of circular movement; the phrase "spinning one's wheels"; the feeling of going forward and yet going nowhere; Nietzsche's model of eternal recurrence as an ancient trope—all are invoked by Picabia in his writings over time and in his works. As visual motifs, circles appear in the form of wheels, whirling gears, targets; the pupil of the prominent Ripolined eye in *L'Œil cacodylate* (*The Cacodylic Eye*) (pl. 76); scattered dots of painted confetti; repeated graphic elements drawn in paint or ink; and as impastoed "points" each with their own individualized "aura." They are also present in two of Picabia's last paintings (pls. 238, 239), cohabitating with a strange shrouded figure in one of them. As such, these circular elements are among the connectors, or red threads, that traverse Picabia's career, linking past to present, and present to past. Returning to the early 1920s, when Picabia coined many of the pithy aphorisms that have come to be indelibly associated with his name, he traveled in February 1922 from Paris to Saint-Raphaël, a resort on the Côte d'Azur. While there, he published a leaflet titled *La Pomme de pins* (*The Pinecone*) (pl. 79).

Sprinkled across each of this leaflet's four pages, with a particular proliferation on the cover, were references to the Congrès de Paris, an ultimately ill-fated yet ambitious international conference organized by Breton that was intended to identify the sources of the "modern spirit."[44] Picabia coupled his own name to one of these

38. For images of "the wandering Jew" produced during the Nazi regime in Germany, see Wolfgang Benz, *"Der ewige Jude:" Metaphern und Methoden nationalsozialistischer Propaganda* (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2010).
39. Francis Picabia, "Soleil," *Paris-Soir*, March 5, 1926, 1; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits*, ed. Olivier Revault d'Allonnes and Dominique Bouissou, vol. 2, *1921–1953 et posthumes* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1978), 177.
40. Henry McBride, "The More Abstract, the Better," *Art News*, March 1950; in Mohler [Picabia], *Für Francis Picabia*, 158.
41. Ibid.
42. Michel Seuphor, "Wet Paint," trans. Dollie Pierre Chareau, in *Picabia*, exh. cat. (New York: Rose Fried Gallery, 1950), n.p. Seuphor's text was originally published as "Peinture fraîche" for an earlier Picabia show at Galerie des Deux-Îles, Paris, in November–December 1948.
43. Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries: Abroad and at Home," *The New Yorker* 12, no. 7 (March 30, 1946): 83.
44. For a thoughtful discussion of the Congrès, see Marius Hentea, "Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris," *PMLA* 130, no. 1 (January 2015): 37–53.

Fig. 12. *491: 50 ans de plaisirs* (*491: 50 Years of Pleasure*). Edited by Michel Tapié. Exhibition brochure. Paris: Galerie René Drouin, 1949, front and back covers

typographical references to the Congrès and did the same with the names of Breton, Aragon, and Jean Crotti, among others. Notably absent in this context was the name of Tristan Tzara, whose public fight with Breton was among the factors that led to the Congrès's cancellation and to the final dissolution of Paris Dada, from which Picabia had taken his leave months before. *La Pomme de pins* is covered with words printed in different sizes and using different typefaces. The text is placed in multiple, intentionally disorienting directions, forcing the viewer to be active, to rotate the leaflet around and around in order to read. Stretching from left to right on the cover, just above the publication's title, appear the words: "Notre tête est ronde pour permettre à la pensée de changer de direction" ("Our heads are round so our thoughts can change direction"). They provide a useful way of thinking about the significance of Picabia's elusive body of work.

Picabia could hardly have foreseen in 1922 how often, and in what ways, his career would prove these words to be both a witticism and a rule. They express a certainty in uncertainty, a desire to be consistently inconsistent, in ways that are simultaneously as negative and nihilistic as they are positive and constructive in their assertion of the individual artist's right to choose. Oppositions between high art and kitsch, progression and regression, modernism and its opposite, and success and failure are undone. This is not to say that all becomes relative or that notions of quality and greatness no longer obtain. It is, however, to state with certainty that the heterogeneity of Picabia's career prompts awareness of the need for new narratives of twentieth-century modern art, and that his irrepressible, unruly, nonconformist genius offers a powerful alternative model. For this, we are all in his debt. The world of art is a richer, more complicated, more unpredictable place because of him.

FRANCIS PICABIA, ONCE REMOVED

GORDON HUGHES

Noblesse oblige: with elite status, as the old saying goes, comes responsibility. And such responsibility, in the eyes of art critic Louis Vauxcelles—he opens his review of the 1905 Salon d'Automne with this adage—weighs heavy indeed on those shouldering the mantle of modernism into the twentieth century. Heavy because, as he and numerous other critics had long complained, and as we now tend to forget, the hard-won advances of ambitious modernist painting appeared increasingly lackluster at the outset of the new century, as once-radical efforts succumbed to mainstream popularity and, worse, emulation. Living up to expectations of everblooming originality, it turned out, was much harder than it looked. For Vauxcelles, the first faint glimmers of improvement began to appear around 1904, and by the time he wrote his review the following year (famously designating a new group of painters "Fauves"), he could hardly have been more effusive: "A marvel," he gushed. "I don't believe such a bouquet has ever before been offered up to the enthusiasts of true painting."[1] By no means, however, did this praise extend to French art as a whole. Far from it. As Vauxcelles makes abundantly clear, in his view the best works in the exhibition satisfied their elite obligations by virtue of their difference from—indeed, their superiority over—the standard fare, sloughing off the atrophied modernism that was everywhere around them, Impressionism above all, or what passed for it thirty or so years after the fact. Doffing his hat, Vauxcelles congratulates the salon jury for rejecting those "who, sincerely or cynically, place Impressionism within reach of the Bourgeoisie, exploiting the technique of Sisley or Pissarro like a brand name, plagiarizing with virtuosity the work of modern pleinairists."[2]

In casting his praise of that year's offerings against the otherwise dismal state of artistic affairs—separating the wheat of the salon from the chaff that French modernism had become more generally—the critic's accolades must have rung hollow for many seeing the exhibition, just as his denouncements must have stung many within in it. For as Vauxcelles must surely have recognized, and despite his claims to the contrary, not just many but *most* of those on display fell well short of his exhortation that an artist "be himself, offering up never-before-seen sensations."[3] Indeed, critics such as Vauxcelles bemoaned loudly and often that originality, the very hallmark of being true to oneself artistically, was fast becoming, if not a lost art exactly, then increasingly lost to art as a concern, a marker of value. And nothing exemplified this problem more than the shopworn, secondhand Impressionism that was everywhere to be seen in the 1905 Salon d'Automne. For unlike the first wave of nineteenth-century Impressionist painters who famously aspired to represent their unique "sensations" of nature through the prism of individual temperament, the vast majority of twentieth-century ersatz Impressionists no longer represented the world through the perceptual lens of original vision but instead replicated the prefabricated impressions of prior artists—nature seen through the temperament of others, as Émile Zola might have put it (but didn't, exactly).[4] Although not mentioned by name, one painter in particular appeared to exemplify this problem for Vauxcelles: the precocious twenty-six-year-old Francis Picabia, whose recent embrace of Impressionism was in full swing.

Picabia's main entry in the 1905 salon, *Le Pont du chemin de fer (Moret)* (*The Railway Bridge [Moret]*), unquestionably skilled in its mixing of *alla prima* wet-on-wet and drybrush scumble, is painted with a deftness of touch as reminiscent of Claude Monet or Alfred Sisley as its central image of the titular bridge. Which is, of course, exactly the problem. Making matters that much worse is its association with Moret. For in addition to being the name of a town made famous by the late-Impressionist work of Sisley, it is also the name of a painter, Henry Moret, widely known in his day for being "typical of those who made a career of reproducing Impressionism," as Alastair Wright describes it, one who parroted the "distinctive pictorial language, the thickly encrusted, roughly textured paint surface and the palette of deep blues and greens with which Monet had captured the coastline in works such as *The Rocks of Belle-Ile*."[5] Moret, the painter, thus bears a precarious relation to his own proper name, which, were one to mistake the middle *r* for an *n*, could, in concert with the subject matter and brushwork, easily be misread as belonging to the very painter from whom he so skillfully cadged.[6] No doubt Vauxcelles had Moret firmly in mind then when he railed against those copyists (at best) and plagiarists (at worse) who "set up their easel at the foot of the same cliff at Étretat" or "in front of the same rock at Belle-Ile as Claude Monet."[7]

In addition to Moret, there was no shortage of others in the salon who were similarly guilty as charged. Theodore (Théo) Earl Butler's *Giverny l'hiver* (*Giverny in Winter*)—an easy target—presented a quite literal example of what Vauxcelles scorned as "a new cliché, Givernyism," while George Morren and Georges d'Espagnat recycled Renoir anew for the umpteenth time.[8] Gustave Loiseau's various Monet knockoffs gave further credence, as if any were needed, to his trouncing by Vauxcelles in the previous year's Salon d'Automne as a "servile sycophant…[of] the master of Giverny," such that "M. Loiseau takes from him with the virtuosity of a burglar."[9] But of all the artists whom Vauxcelles could have singled out for rough treatment in his 1905 review, it becomes clear that he has set his sights squarely on Picabia, even as he declines to name him. Following his condemnation of Monet's imitators, the critic proceeds to attack the kind of painter who, as he describes it, merely copies the same "beautiful effects of the bridge at Moret-sur-Loing celebrated by Sisley."[10] The dig would have been immediately apparent to anyone familiar with Picabia's work. Seemingly directed at *Le Pont du chemin de fer (Moret)*, the only painting in the salon of Moret with (or, indeed, without) a bridge, Vauxcelles's barb could easily have applied more generally to an array of Picabia's work at the time. For as William Camfield and Arnauld Pierre remind us, Picabia

1. Louis Vauxcelles, "Le Salon d'Automne," *Gil Blas* (supplement), October 17, 1905, n.p. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. "Consulting the Salon d'Automne," Charles Morice writes in his 1905 review, "and you will be led, logically, irresistibly, to false conclusions. You will be persuaded that Impressionism is still triumphant, that young artists understand themselves in relation to their paintings, that they prefer landscapes to figures, that they have no worry when it comes to the great ternary of art: composition, expression, decoration. This is, at least, what a good thousand of the 1,636 works exhibited in the salon appear to confirm. But exactly the opposite is true. Let us not stop at these thousands of secondhand works; for all of their futile gesticulating efforts, they constitute little more than the inert matter, the dead weight of a generation." "Le Salon d'Automne," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1905, 378.
4. Richard Shiff places Zola's famous dictum that "a work of art is a corner of nature seen through a temperament," taken from the novelist's 1880 essay "The Experimental Novel," in the broader context of the late nineteenth-century emphasis on artistic originality in *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
5. Alastair Wright, *Matisse and the Subject of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 30–31.
6. Wright, in ibid., makes exactly this point: "The similarity between Moret's and Monet's names—and consequently, between their painted signatures—underlined the close affiliation between follower and forebear."
7. Vauxcelles, "Le Salon d'Automne" (1905).
8. Ibid.
9. Louis Vauxcelles, "Le Salon d'Automne," *Gil Blas*, October 14, 1904, n.p.
10. Vauxcelles, "Le Salon d'Automne" (1905).

Fig. 1. Francis Picabia. Untitled (*Moret-sur-Loing*). 1904. Oil on canvas, 25 5/8 × 31 7/8″ (65 × 81 cm). Private collection

Fig. 2. Alfred Sisley. *Le pont et les moulins de Moret-sur-Loing* (*The Bridge and Mills of Moret-sur-Loing*). 1892. Oil on canvas, 18 × 21 7/8″ (45.8 × 55.5 cm). Private collection

painted a number of canvases that reproduce (read: copy) almost to a T the exact point of view as several works by Sisley of the bridge at Moret-sur-Loing (figs. 1, 2).[11] Indeed, the critic need hardly have restricted himself to this particular scene. Next to Sisley's 1893 *L'Église de Moret* (*The Moret Church*), Picabia's 1904 *Église de Moret* (*Moret Church*) leaves no doubt as to its source. Likewise, most casual observers could (and in all likelihood would) mistake Picabia's 1904 *Meules en Contre-Jour*, *Moret* (*Haystacks against Sunlight*, *Moret*) for one of Monet's famous haystack series, just as they might mistake his Untitled (*Notre-Dame*, *Paris*) (pl. 3), one of four paintings from a series examining Notre-Dame under different atmospheric conditions from an identical point of view, as an obscure variant of Monet's cathedral series. Add to all this Picabia's penchant for using photography rather than lived perception as the basis for his painted "impressions," and the gulf between his art and the original ideals of Impressionism becomes all the more evident. Indeed, as Pierre notes, Picabia commonly used photographic postcards as the source material for much of his painting at this time, such that, in effect, he uses a technology of copying to copy another artist (the anonymous postcard photographer), producing a copy of a copy.[12]

It comes as no big surprise, then, to find other critics besides Vauxcelles denouncing Picabia by name as an "artist with a very specific gift…for imitation [that] amounts to crude plagiarism when, as in the present case, the craftsmanship, the technique, even the motifs, are copied."[13] But such attacks were remarkably few and far between. Most critics chose instead to see Picabia's proximity to Sisley as an indicator of the younger painter's promise. "So much the better if he shares the same emotion!" effused Léon Roger-Milès in his comparison of the two artists. "So much the better if he, like Sisley, feels the eternal beauty of nature everywhere that it manifests!"[14] And among those who took this position—which *is* a surprise—we find none other than Louis Vauxcelles. A mere eight months before his none-too-veiled disparagement of Picabia, the critic proclaimed: "[T]here may be suggestions in him of similarities with Pissarro, and especially with Sisley,… but while so many dishonest followers plagiarize Monet, Sisley, and Pissarro, and steal their effects, M. Picabia, who already possesses a very individual technique, expresses, year after year, a temperament that is his own, and his alone…."[15] High praise, indeed. And hard to square with the harsh words that would follow by the next autumn.

How to account for this about-face? Did the critic simply grow disillusioned with his young prospect, or change his mind? Did he mistake "similarities" for plagiarism? After proclaiming Picabia the genuine article—"a temperament that is his own, and his alone"—did he opt to hedge his bets? Or perhaps—this is my suspicion—Vauxcelles could truly not decide whether he and his fellow critics had been taken in, worrying that he had praised as authentic what was, in fact, counterfeit. Looking closer at Picabia's work of this period, one begins to sympathize with Vauxcelles's predicament.

Take *Effet de soleil sur les bords du Loing, Moret* (*Effect of Sunlight on the Banks of the Loing, Moret*), also from 1905 (pl. 1). Again we see the pervasive influence of Sisley in its brushwork, composition, and framing, its slightly cloying palette (the saccharine pinks in the distant line of trees, for instance, or the overhanging foliage), its sense of nostalgia, and even its locale. It also shares the overall airiness of Sisley's best plein-air work, rendering the luminosity of the scene such that it *feels* light in spite of the relatively thick buildup of paint. By comparison, *Les Châtaigniers, effet de soleil, Munot, Nièvre* (*Chestnut Trees, Effect of Sunlight, Munot, Nièvre*) (pl. 4) manages to loosen, if not entirely escape, Sisley's grip. It is far heavier—leaden, almost—than the older Impressionist's work, especially in the thick foliage of the trees and in the sky as it fades from light blue to deep. More uniform and direct in its overall facture, *Les Châtaigniers* exhibits none of the almost gentle dappling of paint that we see in Sisley or even in *Effet de soleil sur les bords du Loing, Moret*, with its built-up layers and just the right amount of variation in texture, medium, and wetness to keep things fresh. Entirely to its credit, there is nothing refined or polite in the paint application of *Les Châtaigniers*, which looks more smeared than brushed, bringing out an unctuous quality to the oil paint. Most unexpected, however, is the way in which *Les Châtaigniers*, although relatively generic in subject matter, feels entirely ungeneric in mood, carrying the distinct chill and—is it just me?—even the smell of a late summer, early autumn evening. More striking still is Picabia's 1906 *Les Pins, effet de soleil à Saint-Honorat (Cannes)* (*Pine Trees, Effect of Sunlight at Saint-Honorat [Cannes]*) (pl. 2), which somehow manages to combine the airy lightness of *Effet de soleil sur les bords du Loing, Moret* with the heaviness of *Les Châtaigniers*. Making this work all the more distinct are the saturated colors—cadmium yellows and reds, turquoise and sky blue, bright greens, and violet—that look as if they came straight out of the tube. Often used in small quantities, these sharp, almost garish hues are unlike anything one would find in a Sisley, Monet, or Pissarro. And at just over seven feet by ten feet, its imposing size all but dwarfs its Impressionist antecedents.

Between 1908 and 1911, Picabia updated his look several times, shifting from Sisley's Impressionism to Paul Signac's Neo-Impressionism to Henri Matisse's Fauvism as his primary source of influence. But these changes only emphasize the underlying *consistency* in Picabia's painting—namely, his ravenous appropriation of techniques, styles, and the mark-making vocabulary of others in lieu of his own "temperament." Comparing Picabia's 1903 Impressionist *Saint-Tropez vu de la citadelle* (*Saint-Tropez Seen from the Citadel*) with his Neo-Impressionist work of the same title (pl. 5), painted six years later in almost the exact same spot, Pierre argues that, appearances notwithstanding, the differences are ultimately "not meaningful in the least," given that "far from realizing a 'new sensation' before these already interpreted landscapes…it only imposes a different brand name (a Sisley, a Signac)…."[16] Crucially, however, Pierre is quick to stress that despite Picabia's "sometimes justified reputation for insincerity," his stylistic appropriations "should not prevent us from appreciating, as such, the more authentic manifestations of his personality…."[17] Confronted by such work caught between the two extremes of imitation and originality, it is little wonder that Vauxcelles seemed unable or unwilling to pass definitive judgment on Picabia.

11. See William A. Camfield, "Picabia's Life and Work: Part One," in *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. William A. Camfield, Beverley Calté, Candace Clements, and Arnauld Pierre, vol. 1, *1898–1914* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2014), 44; and Arnauld Pierre, *Francis Picabia: La Peinture sans aura* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 40.
12. Pierre, *La Peinture sans aura*, 51–67. Pierre cites a letter from Camille Pissarro to his oldest son, Lucien, in which he recounts with unvarnished disdain Picabia's method for selecting the motif of his salon painting "by means of photography. Shocking! Wow!!! For that he will have a medal and be crowned a great painter." *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, ed. Janine Bailly-Herzberg, vol. 5 (Paris: Éditions du Valhermeil, 1991), 284; quoted in Pierre, *La Peinture sans aura*, 51.
13. G. Devil, unidentified publication; in Fonds Francis Picabia, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, vol. 1, p. 16; quoted in Camfield, "Picabia's Life and Work: Part One," 48, 50.
14. Léon Roger-Milès, "Préface," in *Exposition F. Picabia*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie Haussman, 1907), n.p.
15. Louis Vauxcelles, "Notes d'art," *Gil Blas*, February 10, 1905, 1; quoted in Camfield, "Picabia's Life and Work: Part One," 48.
16. Pierre, *La Peinture sans aura*, 42.
17. Ibid., 69.

Indeed, as off-the-rack as Picabia's Neo-Impressionism can seem, we also see flashes of vision that are equally personal and unique. We see this, for instance, in two clearly related portraits of his first wife, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia—*La Femme aux mimosas, Saint-Tropez* (*Woman with Mimosas, Saint-Tropez*) (1908) and Untitled (*Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, Saint-Tropez*) (1909)—which mix Matisse's Fauvism, Gauguin's Cloisonnism, and Whistler's Japonisme to strange yet undeniably distinctive effect. Or notice how, despite being saturated with clear antecedent sources—the Nabis, Matisse, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Leonetto Cappiello—his circa 1909 Untitled (*Portrait of Mistinguett*) (pl. 7) somehow retains Picabia's sensibility of touch and compositional flare, particularly in the economical handling of the background patterning and the lantern as it echoes the shape of the feather and the base of the woman's hat. Ditto with his 1911 *Adam et Ève* (*Adam and Eve*) (pl. 8), which lifts certain passages almost directly out of Matisse's 1905–06 *Le Bonheur de Vivre* (*The Joy of Life*), while the nude figures appear imported straight from André Derain's 1907 *Bathers*. Straining under its debt to Fauvism, *Adam et Ève* manages to feel distinct to its author regardless: in its ease and facility of drawing (despite Picabia's best intentions to the contrary, or so it seems); in its slightly abrasive facture; in the way that its somber background colors set off, and even clash with, the pink and white flesh tones in the foreground; and, in direct contrast to Matisse, the relish with which he genders his figures, Adam in particular. And then there are works such as Picabia's circa 1909 *Paysage du Jura* (*Jura Landscape*) (pl. 6), representing a strain of the artist's painting at its most distinctive—most authentic, I'm tempted to say—in the years prior to his transition into abstraction. If its debt to Fauvism—André Derain and Alexej von Jawlensky rather than Matisse, perhaps—is immediately clear and unambiguous, the work nevertheless exudes Picabia's own artistic sensibilities.

Is it any wonder then, given the uncomfortable mix of imitation, pastiche, near plagiarism, skill, and—

Fig. 3. Pharamousse [Francis Picabia]. *Max Goth*. Illustration accompanying "Odeurs de Partout" ("Whispers from Abroad"), published in *391*, no. 1 (Barcelona, January 25, 1917): back cover

just to complicate matters—flashes of true originality, that Picabia's self-professed account of his origins as a counterfeiter should, replete with the usual discrepancies and variations, be so widely known and retold? The story, in essence, goes like this: in order to finance his burgeoning stamp collection, the young Francis sold off his father's (or possibly uncle's) painting collection piece by piece, each time replacing the missing work with a forgery of his own making. As a testament to his skill, no one noticed until he confessed.[18] First recounted in 1923, Picabia clearly attached significance to this origin story as a kind of indirect allegory, not only for a certain direction his work began to take around 1917 but also for a certain understanding of modernism that accounts for that direction. Which is to say, rather than tread the path we typically like to think of as necessary to the development of true artistic maturity—cultivating early flashes of potential to find, through hard work and perseverance, one's true artistic voice—Picabia began to consider his artistic formation in quite different terms. Fraudulence, he came to realize, or at least its always-present potential, is not something passed through en route to hard-earned authenticity but part and parcel of the very structure of modernism itself. The philosopher Stanley Cavell, writing about the distinctive experience of modern music and art, puts it like this: "The possibility of fraudulence, and the experience of fraudulence, is endemic in the experience of contemporary music; that its full impact, even its immediate relevance, depends on a willingness to trust the object, knowing that the time spent with its difficulties may be betrayed."[19] As Cavell emphasizes, this condition of fraudulence is fundamental to any engagement with modernism: "Is Pop Art art? Are canvases with a few stripes or chevrons on them art? Are the novels of Raymond Roussel or Alain Robbe-Grillet? Are art movies [art]? …[T]he dangers of fraudulence, and of trust, are essential to the experience of [modern] art."[20]

To Cavell's list we could add any number of works from Picabia's Dada period, including a 1917 drawing of the critic Max Goth that I take to be an almost manifesto-like statement of his engagement with counterfeit (fig. 3). Appearing in the first issue of Picabia's journal *391*, dated January 25, 1917, it can be seen as one of his earliest Dada drawings, a category formally announced three years later under the rubric "Dessin Dada," first with Marcel Duchamp's *Tzanck Check*, followed by Picabia's own Dessin Dada of a photomechanically reproduced horse-race ticket (pl. 71).[21] Crucially, as George Baker notes, the very category of Dada drawing was, at its inception, "infected by the condition of forgery."[22] In the case of his drawing of Max Goth, the forgery at issue was a pastiche of Picasso's much-derided pastiche of Ingres, which is to say a pastiche of a pastiche. Indeed, in his shift from Cubism to Ingres's Neo-classicism, Picasso had been widely accused of not just lifting another artist's style but of producing a kind of fraudulent modernism. By copying Picasso copying Ingres (immediately evident in the drawing's faux Picasso/Ingres-esque "brute juxtaposition of aggressively modeled head with extremely cursive body," as Rosalind Krauss describes it), Picabia draws on—indeed, imitates—his own artistic formation as pasticheur par excellence.[23] Thematizing counterfeit as the very basis of his Dada drawing, Picabia imitates not just Picasso but his own Impressionist past as a copyist—Picabia once removed. Even the photographically montaged head in Picabia's version somehow deepens the counterfeit nature of this drawing. And just as Picasso merged his name with Ingres—"Monsieur Ingres!," Picasso once famously quipped upon seeing his reflection in a mirror—Picabia places his 1920 Dessin Dada beneath a headline announcing a "copy of an autograph of Ingres by Francis Picabia." Except that, on closer inspection, the signature—the very guarantor of authenticity—has been altered to read "Francis Ingres." Just like the drawing, "the signature," as Baker again notes, "was infected by the condition of the counterfeit, of forgery."[24]

The drawing of Max Goth accompanies a short entry headlined "Picasso Repentant," as part of an imitation *fait divers* (very short, often banal news items) titled "Whispers from Abroad." The entry describes Picasso's decision to leave Cubism in order "to return to the École des Beaux-Arts (the studio of Luc-Olivier Merson)." Merson, who taught at the École des Beaux-Arts until 1911, was an academic painter who is best remembered, if at all, for his 1908 designs of French banknotes. The implication, then, is clear: Picasso not only dons the Neoclassical garb of Ingres and Merson in modernist guise, he does so in order to better produce his own banknotes, his own imitation money. As the entry concludes: "Picasso is henceforth the leader of a new school to which our collaborator Francis Picabia does not hesitate for one minute to pledge his allegiance. The Kodak above is his solemn sign." Under the sign of photography—a mechanical copying device that, devoid of sensibility, blindly imitates whatever is placed before it—Picabia swears loyalty not to Picasso but to fraudulence itself, the always-present condition of modernism. Yet even this pledge is a fake, as he well knew. For in imitating the act of imitating, he was—ironically—never more uniquely himself.

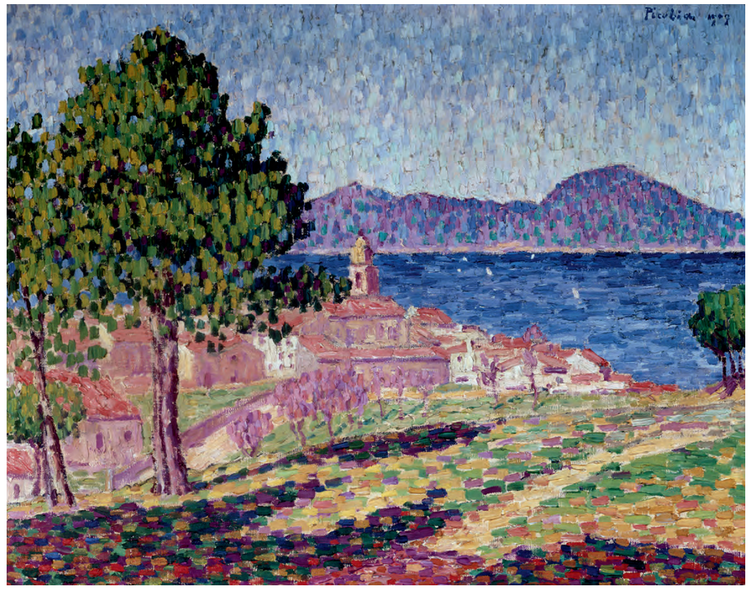
18. For more on this story, see Pierre, *La Peinture sans aura*, 13–14.
19. Stanley Cavell, "Music Discomposed," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* [1958] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 188. It's important to note that in emphasizing the always-present possibility of fraudulence in twentieth-century art, Cavell is not making a reactionary or conservative claim: his point is not that modernism typically fails to meet certain necessary criteria or standards appropriate to the condition of art—that Pop, for instance, isn't art—but that it radically refigures the ways in which we ascribe artistic value. In the absence of artistic skill, aesthetics, and even quality (as opposed to interest, as famously argued by Donald Judd and criticized by Michael Fried), modernism throws doubt and confusion—and along with them, the very real possibility of critical charlatanism—into the ways in which works of art are evaluated. As a result, "bad" works of art are easily mistaken for "good," and vice versa, such that there exists an ever-present danger (and not just among "nonexperts") of being duped, on the one hand, or of dismissing true excellence, on the other. For more on fraudulence and modernism discussed in relation to Cavell, see Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 6–11.
20. Cavell, "Music Discomposed," 188–89.
21. *Tzanck Check* was originally hand-drawn by Duchamp in imitation of both an authentic bank-issued check *and* a counterfeit check; it is neither, and thus it is a counterfeit of an original and a counterfeit of a counterfeit—a point made all the more forceful by the word "ORIGINAL" that appears in red ink. Trumping Duchamp's handiwork, Picabia's Dessin Dada of the horse-race ticket uses a camera, the ultimate counterfeiter's tool, to forge a drawing. Inverting the logic of Duchamp, who painstakingly makes by hand what is supposed to be mechanically reproduced, Picabia mechanically reproduces what is supposed to be made by hand, a drawing. For more on the relation between these two Dada drawings, see George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 118–25.
22. Ibid., 118.
23. Krauss, *The Picasso Papers*, 113.
24. Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, 124.

Pl. 1. *Effet de soleil sur les bords du Loing, Moret* (*Effect of Sunlight on the Banks of the Loing, Moret*). 1905.
Oil on canvas, 28 13/16 × 36 3/8" (73.2 × 92.4 cm).
Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Gertrude Schemm Binder Collection, 1951

Pl. 2. *Les Pins, effet de soleil à Saint-Honorat (Cannes)* (*Pine Trees, Effect of Sunlight at Saint-Honorat [Cannes]*). 1906.
Oil on canvas, 7′ 1 7/16″ × 10′ 1 1/2″ (217 × 308.6 cm).
Private collection

Pl. 3. Untitled (*Notre-Dame, Paris*). 1906.
Oil on canvas, 36 1/4 × 28 3/4″ (92 × 73 cm).
Jeff and Mei Sze Greene Collection

Pl. 4. *Les Châtaigniers, effet de soleil, Munot, Nièvre* (*Chestnut Trees, Effect of Sunlight, Munot, Nièvre*). 1906.
Oil on canvas, 31 7/8 × 39 3/8″ (81 × 100 cm). Private collection



Pl. 5. *Saint-Tropez vu de la citadelle* (*Saint-Tropez Seen from the Citadel*). 1909.
Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 × 36 1/4″ (73 × 92 cm).
Musée de L'Annonciade Collection, Saint-Tropez

Pl. 6. *Paysage du Jura* (*Jura Landscape*). c. 1909.
Oil on canvas, 29 × 36 1/4″ (73.7 × 92.1 cm).
University of California, Los Angeles. Hammer Museum.
Gift of Mr. Stanley N. Barbee

Pl. 7. Untitled (*Portrait of Mistinguett*). c. 1909.
Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 × 19 3/8" (60 × 49.2 cm).
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Pl. 8. *Adam et Ève* (*Adam and Eve*). 1911.
Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 × 31 7/8" (100 × 81 cm).
Private collection

THE BODY AFTER CUBISM

GEORGE BAKER

Church bells, the sound of waves, the still calm of the sea, moonlight, sunsets, storms, are all so much shampooing for the blind penis; our phallus should have eyes, with their help we could believe for a moment that we have seen love up close.

—Francis Picabia, *Jésus-Christ rastaquouère*, 1920[1]

In a well-known photograph of the painter in his studio, Francis Picabia poses in shirtsleeves, surrounded by a chaos of discarded brushes, cigarettes, and used-up tubes of paint (fig. 1). The portrait must date to just before the onset of Picabia's Cubism in 1912, as we stare at the landscapes and nature studies that characterize the artist's Fauvist period in 1911. But there are also bodies. High above the painter's head hangs a canvas that seems to be a study of female nudes in the spirit of Matisse, or perhaps Cézanne in the mode of his bathers or the visual display of a work like *The Eternal Feminine* (c. 1877).[2] Strangely, the canvas has been rotated and rested on its long side to echo

Fig. 1. Picabia in his studio at 32 avenue Charles Floquet, Paris, 1912

Fig. 2. Francis Picabia. *Jeune fille* (*Young Girl*). 1912. Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 × 31 7/8″ (100 × 81 cm). Private collection

Fig. 3. Marcel Duchamp. *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (*Sad Young Man on a Train*). 1911. Oil on board, 39 3/8 × 28 3/4″ (100 × 73 cm). The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976

one of the languid, reclining bathers depicted in the work, or perhaps, more interestingly, to defamiliarize and estrange their bodies, now mechanically and physically (literally) disoriented.[3]

The defamiliarization of the body would become a central stake of Picabia's painting in the year to come, as he settled into Cubism. At first, he painted simple bodies, figure studies like the Spanish-flavored and darkening eclipse that is *Jeune fille* (*Young Girl*) (fig. 2)—a lesson, it seems, in making literal the pictorial convention of *profil perdu* and the loss to painting of visual plenitude that Cubism's questioning of painterly illusionism entailed. In the same dark spirit, but much more advanced along the Cubist pathway, is Picabia's *Figure triste* (*Sad Figure*) (pl. 10). The work's title directly testifies to the artist's dialogue with his new friend Marcel Duchamp; to the centrality of the body in Duchamp's conception of Cubism; and to his figures always launched into motion, like *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* (1912) and its precursor, which Picabia evokes here, *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (*Sad Young Man on a Train*) (fig. 3). But any motion in Picabia's canvas derives from the trajectory of circulating, nonfigural planes, and of the intense, even excessive, volumetric and space-creating effect of the extremely high contrast between abutting light and dark forms. For Picabia's still-legible figure seems securely seated, resting head on hand in an obvious homage to another "sad" figure, Albrecht Dürer's female allegory in *Melencolia I* (fig. 4).

It may press too far to see the notorious geometric form represented in Dürer's print, the irregular polyhedron that the allegorical figure seems to contemplate, as central to Picabia's reflections, though such excessive polyhedrons and trapezoids

1. Translated in Francis Picabia, *I Am a Beautiful Monster*, trans. Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 231. The pejorative French term "rastaquouère" refers to a gigolo and is typical of the French Riviera. See Ralph Schor, "Des marginaux de luxe: les rastaquouères sur la Côte d'Azur au début du XXe siècle," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 69 (2004): 199–212. For further discussion of the term and its various connotations, see Picabia, *I Am a Beautiful Monster*, 223.

2. Scholarship has identified this painting as *Printemps* (*Spring*) (1911), otherwise undocumented since being exhibited at the 1911 Salon des Indépendants. See William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life, and Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 22.

3. The rotated canvas is a cliché of modernist abstraction, one of whose origin stories arises in Vasily Kandinsky's memory of seeing one of his own paintings leaning on its side at twilight and being captivated by its unrecognizable forms. See Leah Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction," in *Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, ed. Dickerman, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 18.

Fig. 4. Albrecht Dürer. *Melencolia I*. 1514. First state of two. Engraving; sheet: 9 1/2 × 7 1/2″ (24.1 × 19.1 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch Collection

do become the basis for the formal language of Picabia's Cubism by the summer of 1912. Witness the heads of the "dancers" in *Danses à la source* [I] (*Dances at the Spring* [I]) (pl. 11), the key early work in a series that would move Picabia quickly toward abstraction, or what Apollinaire paradoxically dubbed "pure" painting, in the months following June of that fateful year.[4] Extremes of light and dark within a palette gravitating around hybrid flesh tones in pink and yellow and red; tortured, conflicting, and wayward geometries, as opposed to Cubism's privileging, by this moment, of the regularized grid: these are now married to a body imagined to be in motion, a body caught up in the rhythms and movements of dance.

Coupled with the dance metaphor, other intimations of motion overtake Picabia's first major Cubist statement, but the spirit of Futurism seems nowhere in evidence. Like a memory of this trope's place at the origin of modernism, harking back at least to Courbet, Picabia's painting aligns the endless flow of water (the "spring" or "source" of the title) with the erotics of the female nude, and both of these with the capacities and materials of the medium of painting. And Picabia ensures that the entire occasion for the painterly scene is wedded to a modernist narrative of displacement, a story of travel to the south, to the light, to the sun. Variously remembered—by Apollinaire—as inspired by a "natural plastic emotion experienced near Naples," or—by Picabia's first wife, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia—as a scene of a young dancing shepherdess actually witnessed during the couple's 1909 honeymoon in Spain, *Danses à la source* [I] followed a series of earlier Cubist canvases with distinctly Italian or Spanish subjects: *Port of Naples* (1912), *La Procession, Séville* (*The Procession, Seville*) (pl. 12), and *Tarentelle* (pl. 9),[5] with its evocation of the eponymous southern Italian folk dance.[6]

In the years to come, such references to Italy and Spain, the Mediterranean and southern Europe, would be central to the antimodernist reaction to Cubism called the "return to order," the resurgence of figuration and classicism in interwar French art. To a large extent, the question of the body and Cubism has always been posed as a question of the *return* of the body, the lapse back into figuration and realism, after Cubism's modernist annihilations. The body and figuration are precisely what Cubism had to break down. But Picabia's early Cubist works remind us that, long before such developments, these Mediterranean tropes could provide *access* to the body for the painter, underlining a place for the carnal within modernism. For Picabia, indeed, modernist abstraction would never represent a negation of figuration or the bodily. The opposition of abstraction and figuration was not the point. Rather, far from conceptions of style and closer to the dynamics of modernization itself, Picabia's early work forces us to ponder how abstraction must be understood as something that *happens* to the body, a process through which the body must pass. And, vice versa, we could also claim: there is no abstraction within modernism that can be uncoupled from the corporeal, no matter the many misguided fantasies of this possibility.[7]

In this light, Buffet-Picabia's insistence that Picabia's 1912 paintings look back, to 1909 and to Spain, strikes one as symptomatic. If art history has so far been fixed on a biographical and empirical reading of such discursive elements of Picabia's history, Buffet-Picabia's claim cries out instead to be unpacked on the level of form. For Picabia's turn to Cubism in 1912 does seem to look back to 1909, but on the level of a dialogue between paintings, an exacerbation of forms. Indeed, his excessive play with light and shadow, the chaotic array of contradictory planes and oblique, lozenge-shaped compositions, with bodies continuously twisted into landscapelike forms, finds its closest parallel within Cubism proper in the paintings that Pablo Picasso made in Horta de Ebro, Spain, in the summer of 1909 (or in his landscapelike portrait heads of Fernande Olivier of that same year).

Whether or not he was intimately familiar with the Horta de Ebro canvases, Picabia's most direct reference in 1912 to Spain, *La Procession, Séville*, evinces the closest formal parallels to Picasso's works of 1909. For the painting rhymes especially with the mounting, mountainlike forms, with the fusion of wayward trapezoids and arcing ellipses, of a work like Picasso's *Reservoir, Horta de Ebro* (1909). And this formal parallel seems more like an insistence on Picabia's part, as if he is clinging to a moment in Cubism—a modality of Cubism—that must be turned to task and made his own.

What might this mean? Rosalind Krauss has claimed that Picasso's Horta de Ebro landscapes testify to an intense contradiction within Cubism's project, as the artist dedicates himself to the breakdown of painterly illusionism only to find himself torn between the demands of vision and those of the body. In *Maisons sur la colline, Horta de Ebro* (*Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro*) (fig. 5), Picasso flattens form and aligns aspects of the represented space with the dictates of the canvas and the vertical visual field, but he also allows deep canyons of painterly space to bore into the pictorial structure, yawning pockets of residual figuration that seem in excess of even the old illusionistic possibilities and thus seem to split the image discordantly between extremes of abstraction and illusionism, vision and touch, verticality and horizontality, diaphanous flatness and vertiginous depth. As Krauss puts it, this is a depth "that occurs when the ground gives way below one's feet, a depth that is a function of touch, of the carnal extension of one's body."[8]

Fig. 5. Pablo Picasso. *Maisons sur la colline, Horta de Ebro (Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro).* 1909. Oil on canvas, 25 5/8 × 31 7/8″ (65 × 81 cm). Private collection

If anything, the planes and spatial markers in *La Procession, Séville*—the constant, thickening corrugation of the rollicking field, the abrupt shifting between surface and depth, the knifing but precarious, oblique planes plunging down and in all directions as if repeatedly into a black void, the painting's imagination of a flow of bodies converted into spatiality itself, into a landscape or a world (the inspiration for this painting was always claimed by the painter as an observed religious procession of nuns in their black habits)—if anything, Picabia's forms intensify the contradictory and carnal effects of Picasso's by then surpassed, even abandoned Cubist work. The heterogeneity and excessive physical dimension of the language of Cubism at Horta seem to be

4. On the dialogue between Apollinaire and Picabia in 1912, see my *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 1–29.
5. See William A. Camfield, Beverley Calté, Candace Clements, and Arnauld Pierre, eds., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, *1898–1914* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2014), 332–33.
6. On the split in the origin story for *Danses à la source* [I] and *La Source* (*The Spring*) (pl. 13), see Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 32. Apollinaire's statement that the works represent Picabia's memory of Italy appears in his *Les Peintres cubistes* (Paris: E. Figuière, 1913), 71. Buffet-Picabia's insistence that she and Picabia had not traveled to Italy, and that the paintings instead looked back to time spent in 1909 in Spain, can be found in Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Picabia: L'inventeur," *L'Œil* 18 (June 1956): 33. Michael Taylor points out that Picabia told a journalist in New York in 1913 that he recalled "stopping at a country place" in Italy, where there was "a natural spring of crystalline water in a lovely garden." See Henry Tyrell, "Oh, You High Art! Advance Guard of the Post-Impressionists Has Reached New York, One of Their Leaders, M. Picabia Explains How He Puts His Soul on Canvas," *World Magazine*, February 9, 1913; reprinted in Maria Lluïsa Borràs, *Picabia*, trans. Kenneth Lyons (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 106. See also Michael Taylor, "Francis Picabia: Abstraction and Sincerity," in *Inventing Abstraction*, 110–112.
7. My title and these thoughts are meant to echo, self-consciously, Devin Fore's recent book *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012).
8. Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. Lynn Zelevansky (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 266.

precisely what Picabia needed to exploit. And when the body as a representation disappears from Picabia's painting with the sudden abstraction of the second version of his Cubist subject, *Danses à la source* [II] (*Dances at the Spring* [II]) (pl. 14), and its sister canvas *La Source* (*The Spring*) (pl. 13), the spatial markers only intensify, the effects of indiscriminate depth and void mount and reach for every corner of the canvas. Contours reassert themselves not as drawn lines or legible figurative forms but in the sheer alignment of the edges of fragmented planes, with these ghostly patterns and their absent lines drilling dark holes into the allover visual field. And the inescapable carnal dimension of such visual dynamics comes to be exacerbated, as the two paintings erupt in a fleshy, corporeal riot of pink, orange, pale tan, and red tones, a bodily stew simultaneously erotic and excremental in implication, the inflamed vividness riven by the more ashen shades of every conceivable type of brown, gray, and black.[9]

Rather than a parody of Picasso and Cubism, as some scholars have recently read these works, Picabia's anachronistic return to Horta de Ebro and turn to Picasso seem instead to legitimize this: the body disappears in Picabia's Cubism only to exacerbate the physical model of his painting. The loss of carnality to Cubist and then modernist painting that has been the trajectory of our crucial narratives of this moment—this logic, for Picabia, will be reversed. And it will be reversed in the language of Cubism, and through its means.

In another well-known photograph of Picabia, the artist no longer appears in the studio. In fact, he hardly appears at all. Shielded by dark goggles, covered in a dull leather riding coat, he sits behind the wheel of an automobile, most definitely *en grande vitesse*, or at great speed, as Man Ray inscribed the photograph (fig. 6). It is a portrait of the artist as a race-car driver.

"I would love to paint like I drive an automobile," writes Picabia, "at 130 kilometers an hour without

Fig. 6. Man Ray. *Francis Picabia en grande vitesse* (*Francis Picabia at High Speed*). 1924. Gelatin silver print, 5 × 6 7/8″ (12.8 × 17.5 cm). Private collection

running over anyone—in Paris, of course!"[10] This is Picabia in 1921, launching his bad jokes but also voicing a credo that had been his for almost a decade. Modern painting would be allegorized as racing; it should be perpetually in motion, the embodied equivalent of high speed. Here is Picabia in 1913:

> I paint a picture of an automobile race. Do you see the cars rushing madly ahead in my picture of that race? No! You see but a mass of color, of objects that, to you, are strange, maybe weird. But if you are used to, if you are capable of, accepting impressions, from my picture of an automobile race you will be able to achieve the same suggestion of wild desire for speed, the excitement of that hundred mile an hour rapidity, that the driver himself feels. I can throw colors, the idea of movement on a canvas that will make you feel and appreciate that.[11]

Art historians have stressed the seeming Futurist inspiration of Picabia's early proclamations on painting, but the states of excess evoked in this passage might as well be borrowed from the poet Charles Baudelaire. Baudelairean modernity, with all of its subjective avatars—intoxication, vertigo, oblivion, diversion, distraction, physical pleasure—would form the world, the constant tropes, of Picabia's own modernity.[12] The experience of the modern occasions an incessant triggering of subjective excess; modernity can only be portrayed as a perpetual motion machine.

It is this impulse in Picabia's work, a radical one that she calls a "release into motion," that would attract a film theorist like Annette Michelson to Picabia. By her account, Picabia's work, from its earliest avant-garde moments, becomes riven by an overwhelming desire, as it repeatedly elaborates various strategies of what Michelson comes to call "temporalization."[13] Struggling to emerge from within his work as a painter, this impulse toward duration, toward temporal extension and, thus, actual motion, can be found in the early Orphic canvases, especially all those just discussed that have their source in a repeated celebration of the movements of dance. The impulse can also be found in the canvases that memorialize another voyage, another displacement: Picabia's travel between Paris and New York on the ocean liner *La Lorraine* and the time he spent in the company of the dancer (and film star) Stacia Napierkowska.[14] These include *Danseuse étoile sur un transatlantique* (*Star Dancer on a Transatlantic Liner*) (pl. 15), *Danseuse étoile et son école de danse* (*Star Dancer and Her School of Dance*) (pl. 19), *Udnie (Jeune fille américaine; danse)* (*Udnie [Young American Girl; Dance]*) (pl. 22), and *Edtaonisl (ecclésiastique)* (*Edtaonisl [Ecclesiastic]*) (pl. 23).

Subsequently, Picabia's proliferation of machine drawings, or "mechanomorphs," construct so many mad inventions that solicit a potential "release into movement," as they call for viewers to imagine the depicted contraptions not frozen, as represented, but in operation, and thus in motion. One thinks as well of Picabia's mechanomorphic form itself, his line; for instance, the many drawings that illustrate

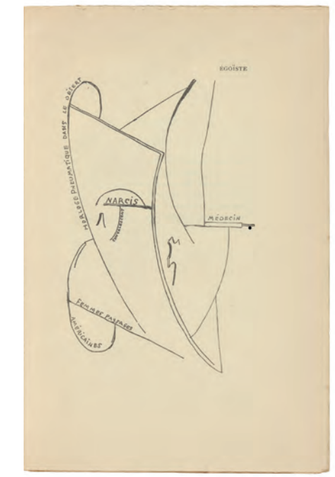


Fig. 7. Francis Picabia. *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (*Poems and Drawings of the Girl Born Without a Mother*) (Lausanne: Imprimeries réunies, 1918), p. 19

his *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (*Poems and Drawings by the Girl Born Without a Mother*) (fig. 7 and pl. 50),[15] illustrations that can be seen as "trembling," as Michelson puts it, "on the edge of animation."[16] Then, too, there is Picabia's insistent allegiance to a "musicalist" aesthetic, an inheritance from Symbolism that attempts to substitute the mobility of music for the characteristic static effects of painting, as seen in *Chanson nègre* [I] (*Negro Song* [I]) (fig. 8) and *Chanson nègre* [II] (*Negro Song* [II]) (pl. 20). This musicalist aesthetic, in Picabia's work and writing, would constantly be allegorized as racing. From the beginning, for Picabia, painting would not stand still.

Of course, Picabia eventually made the transition to cinema, advancing from the representational movement of his paintings to the literal mobility of film. The literalness of this move attracted Michelson, who reads Picabia's earlier painterly aesthetic in

9. Leah Dickerman reads Picabia's abstract works of 1912 as directly "invoking" the Cubism of Picasso, but also travestying Picasso with their "crude" paint handling and "pulsing eroticism." See Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction," 17. Michael Taylor attests to a further bodily exacerbation, and I borrow and extend his reading of *La Source* as excremental in its palette. See Taylor, "Francis Picabia: Abstraction and Sincerity," 110–112.
10. Francis Picabia, "Fumigations," *The Little Review* (Autumn 1921): 12–14; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits*, ed. Olivier Revault d'Allonnes and Dominique Bouissou, vol. 2, *1921–1953 et posthumes* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1978), 34.
11. Francis Picabia, "Picabia, Art Rebel, Here to Teach New Movement," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1913; translated into French and reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits*, ed. Olivier Revault d'Allonnes, vol. 1, *1913–1920* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1975), 21. Here a series of "Baudelairean" words are chosen for the original English text ("l'exaltation," "l'ivresse," "la frénésie de la vitesse").
12. Picabia's affinity for Baudelaire was pointed out long ago in Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et "291,"* vol. 2 (Paris: Le Terrain vague, 1966), 50, 79. The dependence of Picabia's aesthetic on Baudelaire is the subject of extensive analysis in the dissertation of Carole Boulbès, "Les écrits esthétiques de Francis Picabia, entre révolution et réaction, 1907–1953" (PhD diss., Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1993).
13. Annette Michelson, "Painting. Instantaneism. Cinema. America. Ballet. Illumination. Apollinaire," in *Francis Picabia: Máquinas y Españolas*, ed. Maria Lluïsa Borràs and Bartomeu Marí, with the collaboration of Jean-Jacques Lebel, exh. cat. (Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez, 1995), 192–95.
14. See Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 49–50. Art historians have until recently overlooked the fact that the dancer Napierkowska was a crucial early cinema star. For more on this, see the excellent new book by Jennifer Wild, *The Parisian Avant-Garde in the Age of Cinema, 1900–1923* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 62–101.
15. The title of Picabia's book contains ambiguity in the French that is lost in English. While others have translated—and this volume generally translates—the title as *Poems and Drawings of the Girl Born Without a Mother*, I prefer *Poems and Drawings by the Girl Born Without a Mother*, which challenges the traditional subject-object and authorial positions that the project could be seen to set up. This alternate and more radical translation was first proposed in Caroline A. Jones, "The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art, New Women, and Francis Picabia's Neurasthenic Cure," in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones, Peter Galison, and Amy E. Slaton (New York: Routledge, 1998), 145–80.
16. Michelson, "Painting. Instantaneism. Cinema. America. Ballet. Illumination. Apollinaire," 193.

Fig. 8. Francis Picabia. *Chanson nègre* [I] (*Negro Song* [I]). 1913. Watercolor and pencil on board, 26 1/8 × 22 3/4″ (66.4 × 55.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

relation to *Entr'acte*, the film that he produced with René Clair in 1924.[17] Picabia's cinema was configured in absolute contiguity with the aesthetic subjectivity that he had been exploring, a formal model completely opposed to the "cognitive" project of early avant-garde film and dedicated, as Michelson points out, to a "desiring" one.[18] Due to cinema's inherent, fundamental mobility, Picabia could only envisage the medium as a mode and purveyor of sheer excess. "Cinema should give us vertigo," Picabia exclaims, "it should be a sort of artificial paradise, a promoter of intense sensations surpassing the 'looping the loop' of airplanes and the pleasures of opium." Cinema should be a source of "distraction."[19]

In *Entr'acte*, such sensorial intensity is represented in the film's notorious point-of-view roller coaster scenes, its car chase footage, its endless celebration of ballet dancing and leaping and jumping, its narrative motivation in a hilarious chase after a corpse on the loose. By this moment of 1924, Picabia could list the aristocratic pleasures, the brute physical sensations, in which his work would attempt to participate: he sought "a joy comparable to a beautiful night of love-making, comparable to the voluptuousness of lying in the sun, of doing 120 in your car, comparable to the pleasure of boxing or of someone stretched out on the mat of an opium den."[20] To achieve this project, Picabia required an aesthetic of endless motion, only one of whose avatars would be found in film.

Indeed, the "desiring" or broadly physical and corporeal model of film that Michelson identifies as Picabia's own emerges as an aesthetic most powerfully in the moment of the artist's transformation of early Cubism. While Michael Taylor sees Picabia's Orphic paintings as deeply indebted to Léger's earlier "tubular" mode of Cubism, their bodily intensity represents a long overlooked, neglected counter-model for post-Cubist painting.[21]

If *Danses à la source* [I] presents the viewer with a recognizable bodily source—with figures, typical progeny of Cézanne, the trope of the bathers—these bodies were, for Picabia, opened up by the movements of dance. This is more than a metaphor, surely more than simple "content"; it becomes a formal procedure of the paintings that Picabia began to produce, the tortured geometries and constant, excessive shifting of figural planes in space and depth an analogue for the mobility of the represented bodies. The corporeal movement and kinesthetic effects of dance are the motivations that begin the painting series. But with this formal analogy in place, the bodily reference in *Danses à la source* [I] could be jettisoned, with the effect being not a more complete abstraction unmoored from the body but one that itself unmoors the body, one that generalizes and denaturalizes the body's effects, literally spreading the "bodily" across the entire face, the thickened surface, of Picabia's painting. This is what abstraction "does," what Cubism "does" to the body, in Picabia's hands. Cubism's formal paradoxes—its dizzying and excessive sensorial possibilities, as the naturalistic motivations for illusionism come unhinged—convert a painting of bodies into a bodily painting. In other words, a "phenomenological" model of Cubist painting emerges but one that is now far from the Cézanne model of direct physical perception before the motif.[22]

Picabia seemed extraordinarily self-aware of his phenomenological exacerbation of Cubist painting: a title like *Culture physique* (*Physical Culture*) (pl. 24) reflexively names not just the health-and-sports-movement of the epoch (and the eponymous journal in which Apollinaire participated), but also the bodily or corporeal space of the form of painting that the artist wanted to achieve.[23] With undulating, biomorphic planes and passages and interiors like viscera, with kinesthetic vectors like arms tracing arcs in space and a stew of tones both ashen and vibrant, full of fleshy pinks and creams and browns, *Culture physique* shares the general formal characteristic of this moment of Picabia's painting. It confronts us with a deeply linear and planar array of juxtaposed shapes and disorienting spatial markers, in which line itself, however, has been uncannily suppressed, intimating a leakage or porousness of forms in the paradoxical presence of contour and sharp delineation.

Picabia visited America in early 1913 for the Armory Show. Coming after this interlude in New York, the artist was now passing on from the Horta de Ebro–type play of abstraction as a paradoxical and deeply physical illusionism in excess; the forms of *Culture physique* embody instead Picabia's direct response to the newly reestablished shapes and planes of more recent Synthetic Cubism. And they are an immediate assault on the enforced enclosure of such Cubist work and its constructive building of form. For Picabia's watercolors, initiated just before *Culture physique*, of course exacerbate precisely the formal leakage of the painting in their medium's inherent bleeding and fluid spread; in fact, the watercolors that Picabia made around the time of the Armory Show in New York for an exhibition at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, 291, seem to be produced precisely to bring the capacities of watercolor to bear on the phenomenological excess and general direction of the artist's project. And so now small works on paper come to accompany the artist's giant paintings, with the genteel and nature-bound history of watercolor counterintuitively dedicated to the city and the urban as subjects in works like *New York* (pls. 17, 18). They, however, transmute even that urban space into a corporeal one, blushing red or pinkly flesh-toned, glowing—and even, one might say, "flowing"—with the pulsations of desire.

But the whole painterly project of Picabia's Orphism is to extend and radicalize a corporeal Cubism. Taking up the New York or city theme, the artist already during his American sojourn self-reflexively names his project as a phenomenological one, in the most unexpected and extraordinary way for the period, in the work he called *La Ville de New York aperçue à travers le corps* (*The City of New York Perceived Through the Body*) (pl. 16). Long interpreted, too narrowly, as a reference to technology, to the scientific vision of the X-ray machine that pierces the surface of the physical—and which Picabia would then be understood as comparing to the workings of modernist abstraction—the title instead underlines a painterly space that is the opposite of one where underlying structures are suddenly revealed.[24] In *La Ville de New York aperçue à travers le corps*, structure itself comes to be swept away by what seems the force of bodily enervation and erotic pulsion alone.

For this picture takes a New York or city painting and literally *flips it upside down*, reversing the image—as in mechanical reproduction, perhaps—but also now enacting a physical act of rotation upon the object of painting. This flipping, or looping, produces the effect of further abstraction, like the undulating curves that, at this moment in Picabia's art, everywhere begin to overtake prior Cubist fragmentation. We face a composition literally without

17. For a full reading of the project of the film, see the chapter "Intermission: Dada Cinema," in my *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, 289–337.
18. Michelson, "Painting. Instantaneism. Cinema. America. Ballet. Illumination. Apollinaire," 194.
19. Francis Picabia, "Instantanéisme," *Comœdia*, November 21, 1924; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits*, vol. 2, 159–60.
20. Francis Picabia, "À propos de 'Relâche,' Ballet Instantanéiste," *Comœdia*, November 27, 1924; reprinted in Picabia, *Écrits*, vol. 2, 163–64.
21. See Michael Taylor, "Francis Picabia: Abstraction and Sincerity," 110.
22. The emergence of almost every one of Picabia's Orphist paintings from the space of memory as opposed to direct perception—which becomes self-reflexive in the 1914 canvas *Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie* (*I See Again in Memory My Dear Udnie*) (pl. 27)—has been widely discussed in the literature, and serves to differentiate Picabia's phenomenological and subjective model from prior endeavors such as that of Cézanne.
23. I first delivered this essay as a lecture at a Léger conference in the fall of 2013 organized by the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Museum of Art; part of it dates back to my dissertation on Picabia, completed in 2000. Subsequent to the drafting of the essay, I was made aware of Arnauld Pierre's new essay on Picabia's early abstractions, whose title and concerns seem very close to my own. I see the essays as divergent: Pierre's analysis is more discursive than formal in nature, a kind of new historicist mapping of a series of figures and thinkers crucial to ideas of kinesis and corporeality as they relate to the birth of abstract art. See Arnauld Pierre, "'Culture physique': Mobility and Corporeality in Picabia's Abstract Painting," in Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné*, 116–47. Also see Arnauld Pierre, *Francis Picabia: La Peinture sans aura* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 69–112.
24. See Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "X Rays and the Quest for Invisible Reality in the Art of Kupka, Duchamp, and the Cubists," *Art Journal* 47, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 323–40; and "Francis Picabia, Radiometers, and X-Rays in 1913," *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 1 (March 1989): 114–123. Also see Willard Bohn, "Picabia's 'Mechanical Expression' and the Demise of the Object," *The Art Bulletin* 67, no. 4 (December 1985): 673–77.

orientation, perhaps owing to it having been made in a horizontal, table-bound position—a work on paper labored on from all sides at once in its production. In its rotation, the work simultaneously envisions a mobile spectator—the next step in Picabia's deployment of the dance metaphor—who finds her summons in the production of a mobile form, one that depends on a kind of deep structural instability. It is as if we face a top-heavy array of forms, a nervous, almost twitching composition without a base, without orientation or direction, and thus also a form without constructive plausibility. There is some solidity: obliques push back hard into space, only to flip in perceptual reversal, suddenly projecting forward as well as back, a reversibility that echoes and exacerbates the physical flipping of the entire composition. The result is an extreme disorientation, as the viewer faces teetering, impossible forms, a visual scene where it is as if vertigo, motion, and, indeed, motion sickness—a bodily enervation pushed to excess—could be extended to and enacted by the painting itself.

It was the Belgian Surrealist E. L. T. Mesens who first suggested that *La Ville de New York aperçue à travers le corps* was produced by flipping a composition upside down.[25] We know it is a procedure that Picabia's work seems not only to follow but to exacerbate, pushing this formal antiprinciple even further, working on his images from all sides. Indeed, Picabia signed one of these 1913 works on all four sides (fig. 9), as if it were made to rotate in its hanging—and thus in its apperception—in all directions.[26]

Facing the intense bodily kinesthetics and formal or spatial leakage of such works, along with the devices of directionless motion or physical and literal disorientation employed in their production, we can understand anew the largely square format of the majority of Picabia's key paintings at this moment. For the square is what could be called a "neutral" format, an antihierarchical shape, and one that is not keyed to the widening landscape-orientation of human perception. It is, instead, the

Fig. 9. Francis Picabia. Untitled. 1913. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 21¼ × 25½″ (54 × 64.8 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Benjamin D. Bernstein, 1978

feeding ground of a negation of orientation itself, the seedbed of a kind of formal directionlessness, a painting without fixed orientation or ground.[27]

We can understand, as well, the strange abstract titles that descend on the culminating works of the series, *Udnie (Jeune fille américaine; danse)* and *Edtaonisl (ecclésiastique)*. The title *Edtaonisl*, long ago "decoded" as an anagram, was produced by subtracting the final letter from two French words, *étoile* and *danse*—"star" and "dance," the great theme of Picabia's first New York sojourn—and then combining them, so that each penetrates the other, letter by letter.[28] The point of such a procedure is not to initiate a search for hidden meaning, as if that were the essence of "abstraction," but to mirror the erotic contagion of Picabia's disorienting, shattered color planes and their excessive or dizzying recombinatory movement. Indeed, the final letter "e" in the two fused words of Picabia's title is not so much missing as present in the initial letter of the title itself, to which the reader/viewer circles back, creating a fragmented word that imagines both an erotic coupling and an endless circulation or spinning rotation in its mode of operation, its illegible legibility—another analog for the painterly forms that it accompanies.

And we can understand anew the issue of scale in the masterworks of this moment. *Udnie* and *Edtaonisl* are huge paintings, nearly ten by ten feet, surpassing even Picabia's most expansive Cubist works. An intentional pair, equal in size, the works, however, seem to operate through relations of inversion. William Camfield long ago pointed out that one of the two canvases seems centripetal and the other centrifugal; *Udnie* is more "extroverted," always pushing out against its edges, and *Edtaonisl* is more "introverted," an affair of internal compression and movement toward a "cluster" of forms at its middle.[29] This can be pushed further: *Udnie* imagines a space of light, while *Edtaonisl* gathers itself against a space of intense darkness. Then this opposition comes to be inverted as *Udnie*, the lighter canvas, gravitates toward a condition of the monochrome, toward gray and black and white, while *Edtaonisl*, the darker scene, erupts in color, in bold purples, royal blues, reds, and gold. Such inversions *between* the two paintings only add to the forms of flipping and rotation that Picabia deployed, like another mode of formal exacerbation, even intensification, as the two works' oblique planes read simultaneously as vectors, their effects of recession in space carrying forward the constant reading in this series of forms set in motion. Oppositions structure the two canvases throughout, but these are oppositions worked in excess, and on both sides of a divide opened up by reversal and inversion. Miniature forms pepper the canvases, especially at the center of *Udnie*, to throw into relief the vastness of the work's expanse. And with this we sense that the monumental format of Picabia's abstract painting functions not just to occupy the remaindered space of the salon machine or of history painting—like a throwback to the past—but also to allow the phenomenological engagement of Picabia's work definitively to surpass the limits of the Cubist easel painting.

This is a crucial development that art history has barely recognized, hardly touched, no matter the overwhelming formal evidence of the paintings themselves. The physical movement and spatial disorientation of these works extend to their phenomenological interaction with the viewer, their almost total engulfment or absorption of the viewer. The paintings produce effects of anamorphosis and distortion through corporeal engagements beyond the flat picture plane, the mere limits of the pictorial. Another opposition—between the work and its viewer—comes to be worked excessively, perhaps undone. The high point of this development is *Edtaonisl*, which in its massive expanse imagines not a depiction but a physical experience of vertigo, and nausea, and dizziness, and spinning or spiraling movement, as a continuum shared with the body of the viewer—a spectator immersed, absorbed, and entered into the physical space of the painting through the sheer extensiveness of its literal scale. This immersive continuum is another—perhaps the most important—of the corporeal effects of the painterly model that Picabia suddenly embraced.

And so here, by 1913, we face the emergence of a quite specific phenomenological model for post-Cubist painting, a model of Cubist-derived abstraction as phenomenological or bodily excess. This phenomenological excess is the *precise sign of the abstraction of the body*, of the body given over to processes of unmooring and abstraction. In other words, for Picabia, such excess is the very experience of the corporeal becoming abstract, not cancelled but raised to a higher power.

25. E. L. T. Mesens, *The Cubist Spirit in Its Time*, exh. cat. (London: The London Gallery, 1947); quoted in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 50.
26. Picabia would continue to inscribe canvases and pictures on all four sides, most famously in his work, now lost, *Natures Mortes* (1920) (pl. 68). Many contemporary painters, from Mike Kelley to Martin Kippenberger to Richard Hawkins, have returned to this device of Picabia's.
27. It is interesting to compare Picabia's deployment of the square canvas with the most important use of such a format at this moment of modernist painting: Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), the last great "phenomenological" painting in the recent French tradition.
28. The title was first unpacked in the painter Philip Pearlstein's "The Paintings of Francis Picabia" (master's thesis, New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1955), 109; quoted in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 61.
29. Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 60.

Pl. 9. *Tarentelle*. 1912.
Oil on canvas, 29 × 36 ¼″ (73.6 × 92.1 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Mary Sisler Bequest

Pl. 10. *Figure triste* (*Sad Figure*). 1912.
Oil on canvas, 46 7/16 × 47 1/16″ (118 × 119.5 cm).
Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.
Gift of The Seymour H. Knox Foundation, Inc., 1968

Pl. 11. *Danses à la source* [I] (*Dances at the Spring* [I]). 1912. Oil on canvas, 47 7/16 × 47 1/2″ (120.5 × 120.6 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950

Pl. 12. *La Procession, Séville* (*The Procession, Seville*). 1912. Oil on canvas, 48 × 48″ (121.9 × 121.9 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Chester Dale Fund and Gift of Barbara Rothschild Michaels from the Collection of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1997

Pl. 13. *La Source* (*The Spring*). 1912.
Oil on canvas, 8′ 2 1/4″ × 8′ 2 1/8″ (249.6 × 249.3 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Collection, given by their family

Pl. 14. *Danses à la source* [II] (*Dances at the Spring* [II]). 1912.
Oil on canvas, 8′ 3 1/8″ × 8′ 2″ (251.8 × 248.9 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Collection, given by their family

Left
Pl. 15. *Danseuse étoile sur un transatlantique*
(*Star Dancer on a Transatlantic Liner*). 1913.
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 29 1/2 × 21 5/8″ (75 × 55 cm).
Daniel Frachon

Top
Pl. 16. *La Ville de New York aperçue à travers le corps*
(*The City of New York Perceived Through the Body*). 1913.
Watercolor, gouache, ink, and pencil on paper,
21 5/8 × 29 1/2″ (55 × 75 cm). Mark Kelman, New York

Top
Pl. 17. *New York*. 1913.
Watercolor and pencil on paper, 29 3/4 × 21 7/8″
(75.6 × 55.6 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

Right
Pl. 18. *New York*. 1913.
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper,
21 7/8 × 29 3/4″ (55.6 × 75.6 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

Pl. 19. *Danseuse étoile et son école de danse* (*Star Dancer and Her School of Dance*). 1913. Watercolor, charcoal, and pencil on paper, 22 × 29 3/4″ (55.9 × 75.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

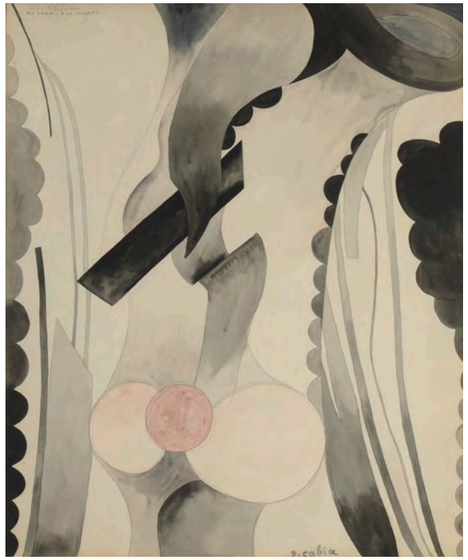
Pl. 20. *Chanson nègre* [II] (*Negro Song* [II]). 1913. Watercolor and pencil on board, 21 7/8 × 25 7/8″ (55.6 × 65.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of William Benenson, 1991

Pl. 21. *Catch as Catch Can.* 1913. Oil on canvas, 39 5/8 × 32 1/8″ (100.6 × 81.6 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950

Pl. 22. *Udnie (Jeune fille américaine; danse)* (*Udnie [Young American Girl; Dance]*). 1913. Oil on canvas, 9′ 6 3/16″ × 9′ 10 1/8″ (290 × 300 cm). Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de création industrielle, Paris. Purchase of the State, 1948

Pl. 23. *Edtaonisl (ecclésiastique)* (*Edtaonisl [Ecclesiastic]*). 1913. Oil and metallic paint on canvas, 9′ 10 1/4″ × 9′ 10 3/4″ (300.4 × 300.7 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Armand Bartos, 1953

Pl. 24. *Culture physique* (*Physical Culture*). 1913. Oil on canvas, 35 1/4 × 45 7/8″ (89.5 × 116.5 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950



Pl. 25. *Ad libitum – au choix; à la volonté* (*Ad libitum – Your Choice; At Will*). c. 1914. Watercolor, pencil, and charcoal on paper mounted on board, 25 1/2 × 21 7/16″ (64.8 × 54.5 cm). Collection Timothy Baum, New York

Pl. 26. *Une horrible douleur* (*A Horrible Pain*). 1914. Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper, 21 1/4 × 25 9/16″ (54 × 65 cm). Collection Lawrence B. Benenson

Pl. 27. *Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie* (*I See Again in Memory My Dear Udnie*). 1914. Oil on canvas, 8′ 2 1/2″ × 6′ 6 1/4″ (250.2 × 198.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Hillman Periodicals Fund

Pl. 28. *Mariage comique* (*Comic Wedlock*). 1914. Oil on canvas, 6′ 5 3/8″ × 6′ 6 3/4″ (196.5 × 200 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Collection, given by their family

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Frontispiece: Picabia, center, with Nicole Groult, left, and Germaine Everling, right, in costume. 1927 (see p. 328, fig. 26)

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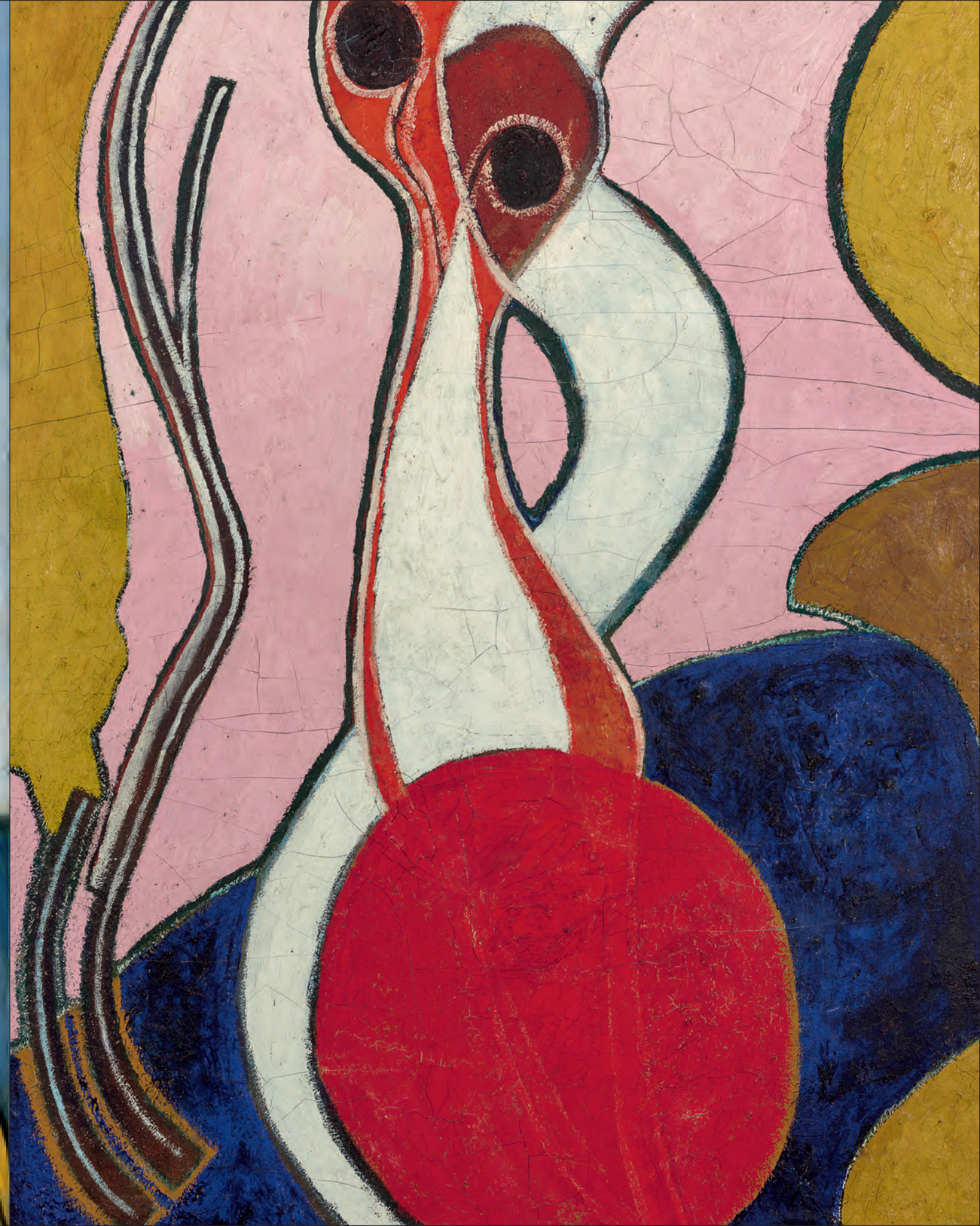

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