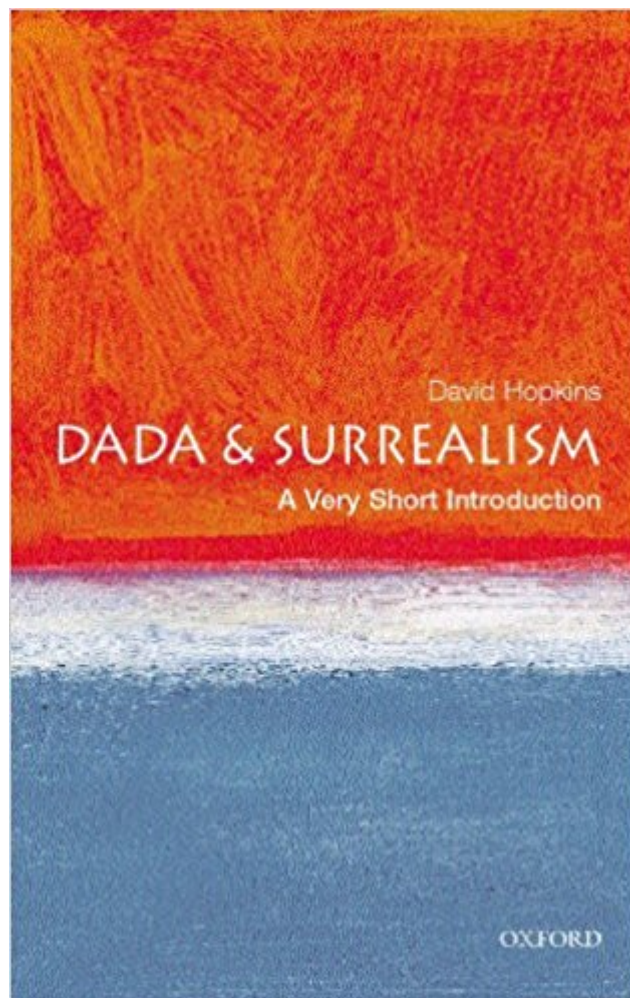




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Dada And Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

The avant-garde movements of Dada and Surrealism continue to have a huge influence on cultural practice, especially in contemporary art, with its obsession with sexuality, fetishism, and shock tactics. In this new treatment of the subject, Hopkins focuses on the many debates surrounding these movements: the Marquis de Sade's Surrealist deification, issues of quality (How good is Dali?), the idea of the 'readymade', attitudes towards the city, the impact of Freud, attitudes to women, fetishism, and primitivism. The international nature of these movements is examined, covering the cities of Zurich, New York, Berlin, Cologne, Barcelona, Paris, London, and recently discovered examples in Eastern Europe. Hopkins explores the huge range of media employed by both Dada and Surrealism (collage, painting, found objects, performance art, photography, film), whilst at the same time establishing the aesthetic differences between the movements. He also examines the Dadaist obsession with the body-as-mechanism in relation to the Surrealists' return to the fetishized/eroticized body. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

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Customer Reviews

As a person with an enduring fascination and respect for the early Dadaists I found this introduction offered a very good and (despite the title) in-depth coverage of most aspects of Dada and Surrealism. The theme is comparison and contrast and also the development of thematic elements in both currents: how they rose to, or challenged each other and society. The basic differences in Dada as Anti-Art and Surrealism as Art-for-arts sake is well considered. The latter bourgeois taste was very much derided by the original Dadas. The political development of both groups is also analysed, their stances on feminism, colonialism and mass movements. The one thing that I found not covered in this book -- and is also not covered in most books on this subject is, how two movements with such anti-establishment themes fared in the sometimes authoritarian societies that spawned them... how for example were the German Dadaist allowed to escape the Freikorps and later the Nazis? What did Franco think of Dali and Picasso? Some French Dada/Surrealists such as Andre Breton were able to escape from Vichy France to America, but what about the others...? In short, although both streams rebelled against the main thoughts that dominated society -- they were almost all consummate individualists -- how were they able to do so? Since most Dadaists survived WWII I must surmise that either Hitler left them alone, or they lowered their profile to such a degree that they become insignificant. But again, since they were at the forefront of criticising the automaton man that society produced in WWI, the question remains, how did they manage to avoid getting it in the neck when the rest of the world was racing headlong into the twin dispairs of Fascism and Communism?

Usually I read these sorts of books when I know little or nothing about the subject in question. In this case, however, I had a considerable familiarity with surrealism and dada. Still, I found this book provided an excellent historical overview of both movements. The greater and even the not-quite-great figures are all present and profiled and their contributions put into context. I thought the level of analysis was actually a cut above what you usually get in these sorts of introductory guides and yet the text remained clear and accessible; even those readers already somewhat knowledgeable about dada and surrealism are likely to find a few fresh and challenging

insights.((Two caveats: the major impact of WWI on the Dadaists struck me as seriously understated and the revisionist groping for "gender correctness" anachronistic and distorting.))In the end, you can't go wrong with this handy little book if what you're looking for is a concise and intelligent dada/surrealist breviary. If, like me, you've read a lot of the primary texts and are a long-time fan of the artistic product of both movements, but found that you've done so in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion, this book will gather up and organize those pieces for you. You'll feel like you took that class in art history that you never -though you wish you had--taken in school.

This is a 5 star for a great explanation and history of this artistic period. One of the few movements that encompassed art, music, literature and politics. A dramatic historical time period pre and post WW1 where the innocence of the world was revealed. Now if your not an art history person this may not make you become one, but if you are, it's a great read.

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