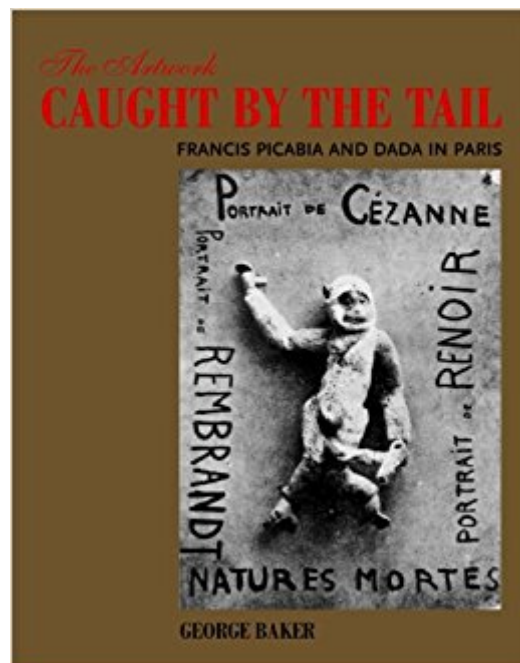




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The Artwork Caught By The Tail: Francis Picabia And Dada In Paris (October Books)



Synopsis

The artist Francis Picabia -- notorious dandy, bon vivant, painter, poet, filmmaker, and polemicist -- has emerged as the Dadaist with postmodern appeal, and one of the most enigmatic forces behind the enigma that was Dada. In this first book in English to focus on Picabia's work in Paris during the Dada years, art historian and critic George Baker reimagines Dada through Picabia's eyes. Such reimagining involves a new account of the readymade -- Marcel Duchamp's anti-art invention, which opened fine art to mass culture and the commodity. But in Picabia's hands, Baker argues, the Dada readymade aimed to reinvent art rather than destroy it. Picabia's readymade opened art not just to the commodity, but to the larger world from which the commodity stems: the fluid sea of capital and money that transforms all objects and experiences in its wake. The book thus tells the story of a set of newly transformed artistic practices, claiming them for art history -- and naming them -- for the first time: Dada Drawing, Dada Painting, Dada Photography, Dada Abstraction, Dada Cinema, Dada Montage. Along the way, Baker describes a series of nearly forgotten objects and events, from the almost lunatic range of the Paris Dada "manifestations" to Picabia's polemical writings; from a lost work by Picabia in the form of a hole (called, suggestively, *The Young Girl*) to his "painting" *Cacodylic Eye*, covered in autographs by luminaries ranging from Ezra Pound to Fatty Arbuckle. Baker ends with readymades in prose: a vast interweaving of citations and quotations that converge to create a heated conversation among Picabia, André Breton, Tristan Tzara, James Joyce, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and others. Art history has never looked like this before. But then again, Dada has never looked like art history. George Baker is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, and an editor at *October* magazine and October Books. He is the editor of James Coleman (MIT Press) and a frequent contributor to *Artforum*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I would recommend this book to anyone fairly deep into Dada art. I had always considered Picabia a side note to the movement. After having read this book it is easy to see that this perception was a miscaluation of his influence. Though most bios over state the importance of the subject and their philosophy (this one seems to also but to a lesser extent) it is a very interesting exploration of Dada in Paris and its slow transformation into surrealism. Picabia the artist, stage designer, cinematographer and general bon vivant are well storied.

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