

HAUSER & WIRTH

ANNOTATED WORKLIST

FRANCIS PICABIA

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Texts written in consultation with the Comité Picabia



Untitled
1902
Oil on canvas
33 x 41 cm / 13 x 16 1/8 in



Untitled
ca. 1911
Oil on canvas board
34.2 x 38.3 cm / 13 1/2 x 15 1/8 in

The year 1902 marked a maturation point in the painting style of Francis Picabia (1879 – 1953), moving from experimentation as a young student finding his voice to balancing both the earthy tonality of the Barbizon School and greater luminosity and haptic attention linked with Impressionism. That same year, Picabia met the son of Camille Pissarro, Georges Manzana Pissarro, and they travelled together to Moret and Martigues in France. The 1902 painting depicting haystacks recalls Claude Monet's famed series and—linked with his friendship with Pissarro as well as inspired by Alfred Sisley—Picabia developed a late version of Impressionism.

Meeting Gabrielle Buffet in September 1908 was a catalyst for Picabia's artistic reinvention. The artist gave a talk in 1906 where he proclaimed he would cease to paint in his current style, claiming he would paint 'forms and colors liberated from their sensory attributes—painting situated in pure invention that re-creates the world of forms following its own desire and imagination.' At this point, he explored compositions and colorations that connected with Fauvism and Neo-Impressionism. The second canvas from ca. 1911 shows an evolution in Picabia's treatment of the haystack motif and is a precursor to his full embrace of the Cubist style in 1912.



La Bourride
1919
Ink on paper
28.3 x 19 cm / 11 1/8 x 7 1/2 in

The drawing's title, the name of a fish stew from the South of France, relates to the origin of this work: the guestbook of a restaurant in Marseille apparently of the same name. Stylistically, the diagrammatic and hand-inscribed work on paper follows Picabia's 'Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère' (1918) with its enigmatic inscription and printed words alongside mechanical-like diagrams, as well as the artist's Mechanomorphic works made beginning in 1915.

The reverse of this drawing features a poem by Picabia dated 13 April 1919, following the Armistice of the First World War and preceding the Treaty of Versailles: 'Sunday, April 13, 1919 / During the Armistice / La Bourride at Henri Fabre's / So gently the Bourride / All dreamy / has good investments. / Blooming smiles / of southern frivolities / the eye / so distinctly / has the magic of song / which opens its nose / in the vicinity / of the perfumes of the Rue de la Paix.'



Untitled
ca. 1920 – 1922
Pencil, watercolor,
ink and gouache on paper
63 x 48 cm / 24 ¾ x 18 ⅞ in



Untitled (Espagnole)
ca. 1922
Ink and watercolor on paper
20 x 13 cm / 7 ⅞ x 5 ⅞ in



Untitled (Espagnole)
ca. 1923 – 1924
Watercolor, ink and pencil on paper
42.9 x 29.3 cm / 16 ⅞ x 11 ½ in



Francis Picabia
ca. 1924
Indian ink and pencil on paper
23 x 16 cm / 9 x 6 ¼ in

Even though the Espagnoles first emerged in 1901 – 1903, Picabia returned to this popular (albeit stereotypical) motif for decades, surely in relation to his Spanish father. While many were inspired by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's Espagnoles, others were simply based on generic images. It has been argued that their first emergence followed a visit to Spanish relatives in Seville.

Typically depicted as bust-length figures, delicately drawn and watercolor-tinted, the Espagnoles often featured bodies slightly turned in space but with highly simplified heads looking directly at the spectator. The group featured here from the early 1920s show a variety of depictions but all with a shawl—from a demure bust depiction to a shadowed full figure and a profile nude complete with mantilla and castanets.



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, La Belle Zélie, 1806

Shrewdly metaphysical and wholly embodying the Dada movement, Francis Picabia's self-portrait entitled 'Francis Picabia' (ca. 1924) is an incredible example of the artist's graphic virtuosity. Created during his immersion in Dadaism, which began in 1918, the profile, starkly illuminated against the undulating inky background, is mask-like, as if suggesting that Picabia's own face masks his true underlying nature. The inclusion of his signature along the side of his jaw is typical of his works of this time period, which frequently juxtaposed text and image.



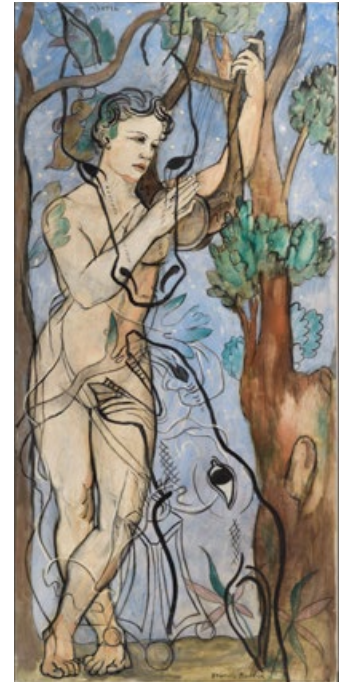
Untitled
ca. 1926
Pencil and watercolor on paper
24 x 18 cm / 9 ½ x 7 ⅛ in



Untitled
ca. 1926 – 1927
Pencil on paper
27.5 x 17.5 cm / 10 ⅞ x 6 ⅞ in

From 1924 – 1927, Picabia worked on his Monster series, which led to his Transparencies. The Monster series, which first depicted embracing lovers based on postcards and subsequently moved to classical sources, is marked by parodic and colorful experimentation in which figures have multiple eyes and patterns and colors aggressively clash.

Picabia was often, and characteristically, working in more than one manner at once. Thus, the nudes seen here show one facet of the artist's practice which had an incredibly imaginative range. The lyre-holding nude form reappears in the Transparency entitled 'Myrtil' from ca. 1929 – 1930 and is overlaid with horse heads—possibly Apollo transformed—and an ancient drinking vessel.



Francis Picabia, Myrtil, ca. 1929-1930



Untitled
ca. 1930
Pencil on paper
34.4 x 24 cm / 13 ½ x 9 ½ in



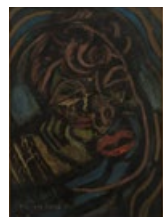
Genèses
ca. 1930 – 1931
Oil on canvas
116 x 85 cm / 45 ⅞ x 33 ½ in

Picabia's celebrated and ingenious series of Transparencies (Transparencies), which he began in 1927 and continued to develop throughout the 1930s, drew upon an eclectic range of sources, from Classical statuary to Romanesque frescos, and feature imagery that overlap across each composition, recalling the illusory effect of multiple-exposure photography. The ethereal, dreamlike works from this series include monochromatic drawings and multi-hued paintings.

In the work from ca. 1930 – 1931, the inscribed title of 'Genèses' translates to geneses rather than genesis, implying multiple points of origin and mirroring the complex composition, which includes images of a large face, a pair of nude children, two monkeys and tumbling dice; here, both evolution and chance seem to be implicated and intertwined.



Untitled
1932
Charcoal and ink on paper
63.5 x 48.8 cm / 25 x 19 ¼ in



Transparence, Portrait de femme
(Transparency, Portrait of a Woman)
ca. 1937 – 1939
Oil on board
52.5 x 38 cm / 20 5/8 x 15 in

The later 'Transparence, Portrait de femme' from ca. 1937 – 1939 features a darker color palette and multiple faces with vivid red lips. The source image for this underlying figure was likely drawn from the June 1936 cover of Paris Sex-Appeal, positioning the work as an early progenitor of Picabia's wartime nudes.



Le Zèbre (The Zebra)
ca. 1909 – 1933
Oil on canvas
60 x 73 cm / 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

A rare example from Picabia's *Transparencies*, this disorienting composition layers a bold outlined image over an early Pointillist landscape from around 1909. At this stage in his career, Picabia was dedicated almost exclusively to Impressionist landscapes, drawing inspiration from the idyllic French countryside and the great Impressionist masters, including Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley and Paul Signac. In 1925, Picabia retreated from Paris to Mougins in the South of France, where he began producing his celebrated *Transparencies*. In 'Le Zèbre' (ca. 1909 – 1933), Picabia indicates a domestic table scene in translucent linework, populated by a curving knife, wavering spoons, folded napkin triangles and goblets. A striped zebra fish sits at the center of the composition, while a slender hand descends from the upper right.

As poet Jean van Heeckeren noted in an early review of the *Transparencies*: 'Picabia has made an extraordinary discovery in painting, which consists in superimposing several figures 'par transparence'. No one had done this before him... This discovery is just as important and generative as that of nonrepresentation.'



Untitled
ca. 1932
Pencil and ink on paper
65.1 x 50.1 cm / 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in



Visage de femme (Face of a Woman)
ca. 1941
Pencil and charcoal on paper
33 x 24.5 cm / 13 x 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ in

As seen previously, Picabia often worked more immediately and classically with works on paper and showed an incredible deftness with material to create dynamic drawings. The drawing from ca. 1932 is bold and frontal with a variety of marks in pencil and ink and is more clear in delineation than other *Transparence* works. The wartime drawing from ca. 1941 shows a softer approach in pencil and charcoal but is equally compelling and dynamic—a translation of the artist's focus on photo-based realist works at the time.



French Cancan
ca. 1937 – 1938
Oil on board
103.8 x 74.3 cm / 40 ⁷/₈ x 29 ¹/₄ in

Embodying the subversive spirit of Francis Picabia's diverse, groundbreaking oeuvre, 'French Cancan' (ca. 1937 – 1938) reworks an image from a 1937 issue of Paris Magazine, rendering a cancan dancer—dancers who were a mainstay of Parisian nightlife beginning in the late 19th Century—with stylized contours and in a rich, blue-toned palette. The sensuous painting exemplifies the artist's practice of appropriating photographs from French magazines to produce erotic portraits of women—an approach that came to define his provocative work during the Second World War.

'French Cancan' was made right after Picabia departed from his transformative Transparency paintings, taking his practice in an entirely new direction that daringly blurred the lines between 'high' and 'low' culture.

Among the earliest of a small but distinct group of paintings that Picabia made featuring cancan dancers, the work draws directly from a risqué publication while compounding pre-existing art historical fascinations with cabarets, café-concerts and related sites signifying sexual freedom and spectacle in the modern age.



Paris Magazine, no. 66 (February 1937)



Femme au châle blanc
(Woman in White Shawl)
ca. 1941 – 1942
Pencil and oil on board
76 x 55 cm / 29 ⁷/₈ x 21 ⁵/₈ in



Nu de dos devant la mer
(Nude from Behind, in Front of the Sea)
ca. 1942 – 1943
Oil on cardboard
75 x 53 cm / 29 ¹/₂ x 20 ⁷/₈ in

Picabia's important Nudes series is often heralded as one of the earliest precursors to Postmodernism. In the 1940s, Picabia embraced a new phase of photo-based painting, building upon the Dadaist principle of appropriating found imagery. At this time, amidst the backdrop of the Second World War, Picabia relocated to the South of France, where he drew inspiration from commercial illustrations and erotic magazines from the 1930s. Marking a significant departure from his preceding series of Transparencies, Picabia gleaned his sources directly from the pages of risqué publications like Paris Magazine and Paris Sex-Appeal, alongside celebrity headshots and nightclub advertisements. With great skill, he combined and reinterpreted the photographs from these publications, resulting in entirely new, painted compositions of female nudes. Through this process of appropriation and unconventional combinations, he produced highly evocative works that challenged established artistic norms and notions of taste.



Untitled
ca. 1942 – 1943
Pencil and oil on cardboard
75.6 x 51.4 cm / 29 ³/₄ x 20 ¹/₄ in

In 'Untitled' (ca. 1942 – 1943), Picabia portrays a nude woman in a crouched position, her legs adorned with a sheer fabric, as she gazes towards the viewer—a pose derived from a photograph featured in the February 1936 issue of Mon Paris. In doing so, Picabia juxtaposes the

mediums of painting and photography, drawing attention to both the presence of the camera and the artist's hand.

Equally based on an October 1937 edition of Paris Magazine, 'Nu de dos devant la mer' (ca. 1942 – 1943) displays a tightly cropped figure against a wall of rippling water, presenting a multi-perspectival view both bold and captivating.



Les rochers rouges (The Red Rocks)
ca. 1942 – 1943
Oil on cardboard mounted on wood
54 x 64.5 cm / 21 ¼ x 25 ⅜ in

Beginning around 1938, connected to an exhibition at the Galerie de Beaune in Paris, Picabia revisited landscape painting from his Impressionist period but with a new perspective. As Arnaud Pierre recounts in an essay in the third volume of the catalogue raisonné, these understudied works done in thick impasto and vivid colors are bold and contemporary in their approach.

Picabia's French Riviera landscapes ignored the urban development of the time in favor of a lush celebration of nature; however, their source material was not directly en plein air but based on the colorized picture-perfect postcard, which was a growing industry. A more complex relationship with the cliché (both in the sense of stereotype but also the French word for photograph), Picabia engaged not with the experience of nature but the mediated experience of nature through the image/ photograph. This may be due in part to exposure to photography via his maternal grandfather, photographer Alphonse Davanne, who was a founding member of the French Society of Photography in 1854.



Trèfle à une feuille (One-Leaf Clover)
ca. 1946 – 1947
Oil on plywood
152 x 96 cm / 59 7/8 x 37 3/4 in



Untitled
ca. 1946 – 1947
Oil on cardboard mounted on wood
61 x 50 cm / 24 x 19 5/8 in



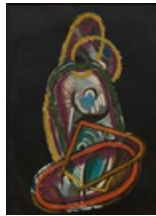
Untitled
1947
Oil on cardboard
60.6 x 49.7 cm / 23 7/8 x 19 5/8 in



Composition abstraite
1947
Oil on cardboard
90 x 72 cm / 35 3/8 x 28 3/8 in



Niagara
ca. 1947
Oil on plywood
149 x 95 cm / 58 5/8 x 37 3/8 in



Le viol (The Violation)
ca. 1948
Oil on cardboard
105 x 75 cm / 41 3/8 x 29 1/2 in

After living in the South of France, Picabia returned to Paris in 1945, where he spent his final years creating innovative new works by returning to some of his earliest interests and motifs while also pushing into Abstraction. Picabia's migration toward simplified, non-figurative modes of expression, reflects the milieu that fostered the emergence of Art Informel in post-war Paris—a movement that advocated for a radical break from traditional aesthetics and championed unmediated, organic forms.

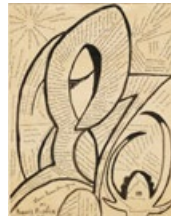
A mesmerizing play of colors and textures, 'Niagara' (ca. 1947) is a profoundly disorienting composition—an engrossing visual riddle that encourages close, repeated looking. Although ostensibly abstract, the shape-shifting amorphous form variously recalls a shell, an ancient Greek corroded bronze helmet and machine-made automobile parts. Equally, 'Trèfle à une feuille' (ca. 1946 – 1947)—depicting a stylization of an African mask while maintaining a dark void—layers color and evokes shapes to create a space for the primordial and archetypal.

During the same period, there was a renewed focus on Picabia's practice by critics, scholars and gallerists, who, 30 years after Dada began, were finally attempting to historicize and theorize the movement and its associated artists. Several of these Dada enthusiasts, including Michel Tapié and artist Francis Bott, considered Picabia one of Dada's last remaining true representatives, bestowing him with the nickname 'Picadada.' Tapié described Picabia's postwar work as 'un art autre' (art of another kind), arguing that Picabia and Marcel Duchamp were 'the two artists who remain ... the most current, the most available.'

'Le viol' (ca. 1948) ingeniously conjures aspects of Picabia's mechanomorphic Dada imagery, recalls the evocative forms and titles of his works from the early 1910s and hints at the superimpositions and Old Master sources of his later Transparencies. Both the hidden and central shapes echo the symmetrical loops and interlocking forms of Picabia's iconic Dada works, such as his provocative 'Le double monde' (1919), which famously responds to his close friend Duchamp's notorious 'L.H.O.O.Q' (1919), and the anthropomorphic, suggestive mechanical imagery of works like 'Portrait de Marie Laurencin' (1916 – 1917), which Picabia made after Duchamp gifted him his iconic 'Bride' painting of 1912.



Composition liée à "Chi-lo-sa"
ca. 1949 – 1950
Ink on paper
22.5 x 17.3 cm / 8 7/8 x 6 3/4 in



Ilma's Paris Horizons
1951
Pen and India ink on paper
65.1 x 49.8 cm / 25 5/8 x 19 5/8 in



Dada
1951
Ink on paper
25.7 x 20 cm / 10 1/8 x 7 7/8 in

'Composition liée à "Chi-lo-sa"' (ca. 1949 – 1950) features the recurring form of a spread-legged figure also seen across drawings and works on paper, most clearly in the painting 'Colloque' from 1949. Here, the form is inverted and transformed into a fantastic geometric creature with a numbered clockface.

Handwritten inscriptions by the artist's last wife, Olga Mohler, in 'Ilma's Paris Horizons' (1951) consist of names of galleries, hotels, restaurants, music halls, bars, akin to a Paris grand tour (or 'tour d'horizons'). Its title could be seen in relation to Ilma's Paris Grapevine, a newsletter published from 1946 to 1952 by the American journalist Viola Ilma, which reported on Parisian cultural life for an American audience (particularly international executives). The main sketched components by Picabia are adapted from two works from the same year drawing on Catalan Romanesque imagery (a source of inspiration in the late 1920s that Picabia revisited after the war): 'Jeudi' and 'Tableau vivant' rendered in outline. Echoing the artist's incredible Dada-era 'L'oeil cacodylate' (1921) with the use of text as a compositional element, 'Ilma's Paris Horizons' offers a graphic reinterpretation.

It is suspected that Picabia produced the 1951 drawing 'Dada' in connection with the exhibition devoted to his Dada period opening 20 November 1951 at the Paris Galerie Artiste et Artisan. The basis of the figures come from earlier posters that Picabia made for gala dinners at Les Ambassadeurs de Cannes in 1931 and 1932, for which the artist was the creative director of certain gala evenings.





Composition
1951

Oil on cardboard, mounted on canvas
55 x 46 cm / 21 ⁵/₈ x 18 ¹/₈ in

A thickly painted, highly textural work, 'Composition' (1951) features at its center two vertically oriented yellow forms embellished with dashed lines. It is clear from the underlying colors seen around the painted shapes, the texture of underpainting and a previous signature, that another painting lies beneath, as was typical practice for Picasso in his work after 1945, which fully embraced abstraction.

In an interview Picasso gave to the *Journal des Arts* in 1945, Picasso explained his motivations for turning to abstraction later in life. He declared 'I must know what painting thinks, what painting feels, which means feeling 'colors,' loving 'lines,' living 'shapes,' [...] and all this is the result of a long history. It is the result of a perpetual personal quest related to the work of an artisan which is also that of an artist which leads me to the point where, from a new 'technique,' a new 'style' emerges'. To the question 'What does one see in your current works?', he replied: 'Everyone sees something different and may even see something else each day according to his state of mind [...] each painting is for me a drama... aim[ing] to reach that elusive but ecstatic moment where I know that I have grasped the unattainable, the real'.