

# The New Criterion

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## Exhibition note

by Mario Naves

*On “Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round So Our Thoughts Can Change Direction” at the Museum of Modern Art.*

**F**rancis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction” makes the twentieth century seem very small. At least that’s the observation I came to upon exiting moma’s sizable retrospective of paintings, drawings, collages, and ephemera by the self-described “beautiful monster.” The exhibition begins with early forays into Post-Impressionism, and follows with a succession of catch-as-catch-can styles: offshoots of Cubism; diagrammatic paeans to the machine; obtuse riffs on Ingres; a louche Suprematism; absurdist experimentations in film and theater; “monster” couples rendered in gloss and globs; Biblical imagery applied in washy overlays; oil-on-canvas appropriations of nudie magazines; and abstractions that are all thumbs, scrabbled surfaces, and graffitied genitalia. There are additional byways: out-of-left-field pictures of...

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