

FRANCIS PICABIA



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FRANCIS PICABIA (1879-1953)

Lunis

c. 1929

Signed lower right, "Francis Picabia"

oil on canvas

25 ½ x 20 ½ in. (64.7 x 52 cm)



WATCH VIDEO

PROVENANCE

Maurice Montet, Paris

Galerie Ch.. Le Chanjour, Nice (1979)

Private Collection, Switzerland (1980-2001)

Lucien Bilinelli, Brussels and Milan (2006)

Sale: Sotheby's, London, 7th February 2006, lot 65

Private Collection, Russia (2006-2009)

Sale: Sotheby's, London, 3rd February 2009, lot 22

Private Collection (2009-2015)

Sale: Sotheby's, London, Surrealist Art Evening Sale, 3rd February 2015, lot 75

Private Collection, California

LITERATURE

W. A. Camfield, B. Calté, C. Clements, A. Pierre, *Francis Picabia Catalogue Raisonné. Volume III (1927-1939)*

— IMPORTANT FACTS

- Francis Picabia's *Lunis* from 1929-1930 belongs to an exploration by the artist of layered figurative compositions. Called *Transparences* for their overlapping images akin to photographic transparencies, the works in this series mimic the delicate translucent qualities of a butterfly's wings.
- The ethereal and surreal compositions of the *Transparences* stand in contrast to the artist's earlier explorations of Pointillism, Cubism, and perhaps most notably Dadaism.
- In paintings like *Lunis*, Picabia embraces ambiguity, opting for evocative subtlety over the satirical arresting nature of Dada.

DETAIL IMAGES







Francis Picabia



LUNTS

MARKET ANALYSIS

Francis PICABIA

Statistical Analysis

Number of lots	1901
Change from 1/1976 - 7/2021	+3332.9%
Compound Annual Growth Rate	7.9

Revaluation

Input value	0 USD
Revalue date	07/2021
Revaluation	0 USD

Central 80%-USD (Nominal terms)

AMR | Art
Market
Research



The graph by Art Market Research shows that since 1976, paintings by Picabia have increased at an 7.9% annual rate of return

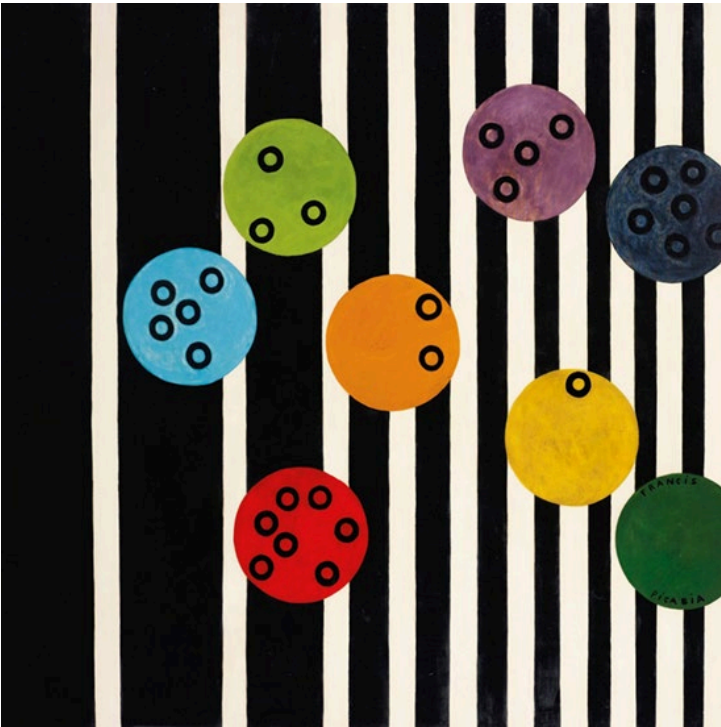
The top 5 works by Francis Picabia sold at auction are from the 1920s, his most desirable period.

Four of the top five Picabia works sold at auction were sold within the last two years

Lunis (1929-1930) is one of the few Transparencies privately held.

Recent record-setting sales for works by Claude Monet (\$110.7 million in 2019) and Sandro Botticelli (\$92.2 million in 2021) show increasing demand for the best examples from each art historical period.

TOP PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION

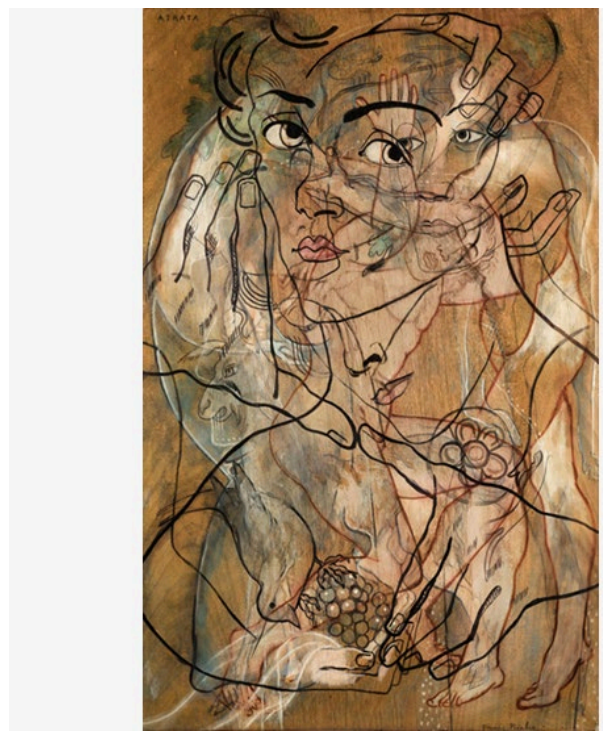


Volucelle II
c.1922
ripolin on canvas
78 x 98 in. (65 × 81 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
November 2013 for \$8,790,000**

Atrata
c. 1929
oil and pencil on paper
59 x 37 ½ in. (92.8 x 92.5 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's London:
February 2019 for \$4,942,000**



TOP PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



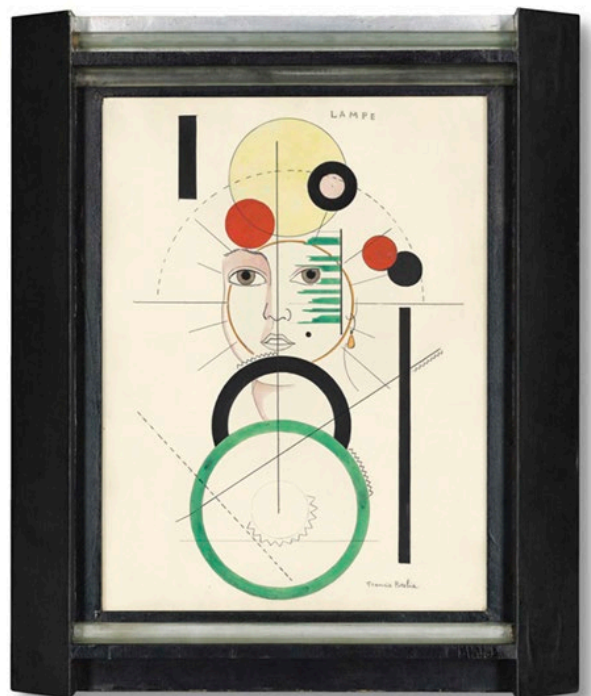
Minos
1929

oil, watercolor and pencil on panel
59 ½ x 38 in. (151.1 x 96.5 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's Paris:
October 2020 for \$4,697,000**

Lampe
c. 1923
watercolor, brush and India ink
and pencil on paper
24 ¾ x 18 ½ in. (62.8 x 46.9 cm)

**Sold at Christie's London:
October 2016 for \$4,640,000**



COMPARABLE PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION

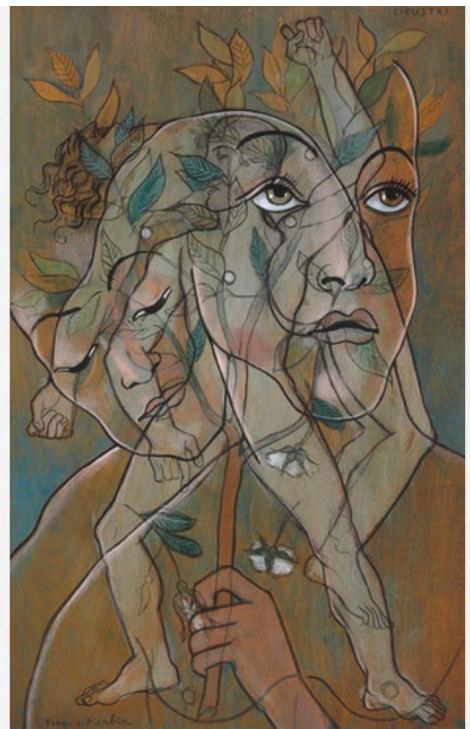


Atrata
c. 1929
oil and pencil on paper
59 x 37 ½ in. (149.8 x 95.2 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's London:
February, 2019 for \$4,942,000**

Ligustri
c. 1929
oil, gouache, and brush and black ink
over pencil on panel
59 ¾ x 37 ⅞ in. (151.7 x 96.5 cm)

**Sold at Christie's, London:
February 2020 for \$4,538,216**



PICABIA PAINTINGS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



The Museum of Modern Art New York

Transparence - Tête et Cheval

c. 1930

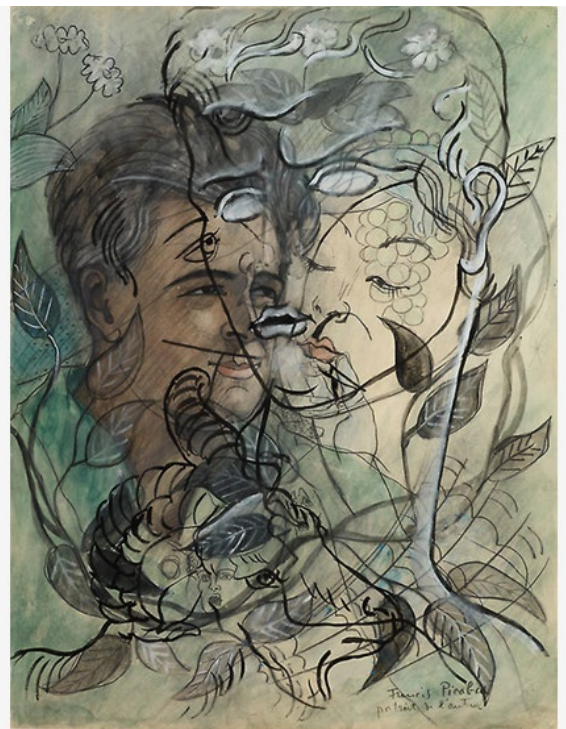
ink, gouache, and watercolor on paper
30 ½ x 23 ¼ in. (77.4 x 59 cm)

The Art Institute of Chicago

Self Portrait

c. 1929

gouache, pen and black ink, and
black crayon on cream wove paper
28 ⅞ x 36 ⅜ in. (73.6 x 92.3 cm)



"Art must be unaesthetic in the extreme,
useless and impossible to justify."

Francis Picabia

HISTORY

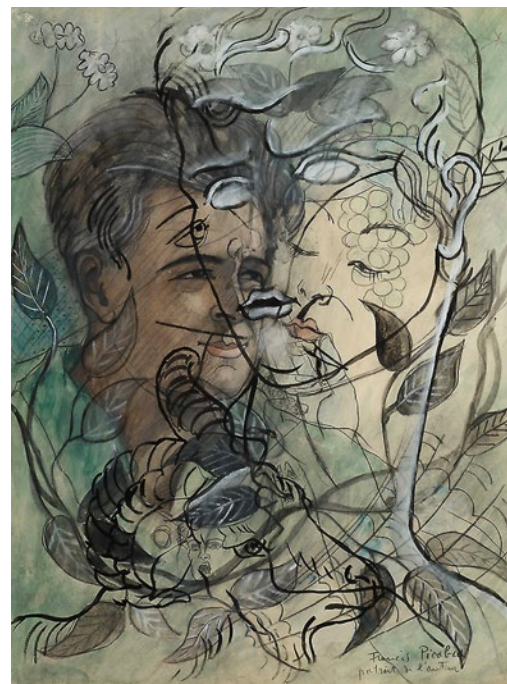


Francis Picabia in his studio, c. 1912

Francis Picabia's *Lunis* from 1929-1930 belongs to an exploration by the artist of layered figurative compositions. Called *Transparencies* for their overlapping images akin to photographic transparencies, the works in this series mimic the delicate translucent qualities of a butterfly's wings. Indeed, Picabia likely looked to those elegant insects for inspiration, studying an encyclopedia of butterfly species (*Atlas de poche des papillons de France, Suisse et Belgique* by Paul Girod) that was in his personal library. In *Lunis*, dotted wings swirl and mingle with other compositional elements, blending and transforming with other layers and lines – merging with the outline of a woman's face, a bird's contour, or the less-defined linear elements that draw the viewers eyes around the painting in graceful arcs.

The *Transparencies* is a major body of work that Picabia created in a short period between c. 1928-1931. These ethereal and surreal compositions stand in contrast to the artist's earlier explorations of Pointillism, Cubism, and perhaps most notably Dadaism. In the late teens and early '20s, Picabia was a dominant figure of that movement alongside his contemporaries and friends Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. Among his most celebrated contributions to Dadaism are the "portraits mécaniques," which applied a fascination with the machinery of the modern world to experiences and expressions of the human condition. These mechanomorphic elements and collage-like images, though on the surface appear to be quite different from his later surrealist explorations, suggest a common thread of complex structure with layers of image and meaning. Picabia would ultimately reject Dadaism, maintaining its capacity to shock and affect the viewer had diminished.

In paintings like *Lunis*, Picabia embraces ambiguity, opting for evocative subtlety over the satirical arresting nature of Dada. Here, the eye flutters between birds, plants, butterflies, and the tranquil



Francis Picabia
Transparence - Tête et Cheval, c. 1930
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Francis Picabia
Self Portrait, c. 1929
The Art Institute of Chicago



gazes of three faces, which suggest references to the three graces of Greek mythology pictured in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Picabia certainly could have looked to this Italian master for inspiration, but the layered references in *Lunis* elude easy identification. This piece is a complex and mysterious arrangement, enhanced by captivating color. It will be included in the forthcoming Picabia catalogue raisonné being prepared by the Comité Picabia.





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