

PICABIA'S LIFE AND WORK: PART THREE

*Me, I paint because
I am intoxicated by painting.
I cannot not paint*

—Picabia to Rose Adler, August 7, 1930

Volume II ended at a transitional moment in Picabia's career, mid-1927. He had established himself in his "Château de Mai" near Mougins in the south of France some years after his definitive break with Dada and his scornful rejection of the nascent Surrealist movement [figs. 1, 2].¹ His pathbreaking forays into nonobjective painting and mechanomorphic imagery were already receding into art history, and the human form had returned to prominence in his art. His production of so-called "monstre" paintings and drawings had perhaps slowed by the time of his summer holiday in Barcelona in 1927 with his son, Lorenzo, and Lorenzo's governess, Olga Mohler. Soon after he began making works, often by means of transforming older works, incorporating increasingly prominent effects of transparency. Many initially included motifs drawn from Catalan Romanesque art illustrated in a guidebook to the Barcelona municipal museum Picabia presumably acquired there, others from figures originating in line engravings after ancient Greco-Roman artifacts.²

The broad outline of Picabia's artistic production encompassed by this volume, from mid-1927 to the end of 1939, is predominately a long and broad exploration of the idea of transparency in many forms: pictorial, conceptual, and even technical. This marked a significant departure from most of his earlier work, which, varied as it was, generally stressed clear and often isolated forms, in painting executed *alla prima*. His unmitigated fascination with the implications of transparency stretches into 1933, when competing compositions

Fig. 1 Man Ray, *Château de Clavary à Auribeau-sur-Siagne*, August 1927.
Left to right: Germaine Everling, François de Gouy d'Arcy, Russell Greeley, Francis Picabia, Kiki, and Thérèse Treize

▷ Fig. 2 Picabia by the pool at the Château de Mai, 1930

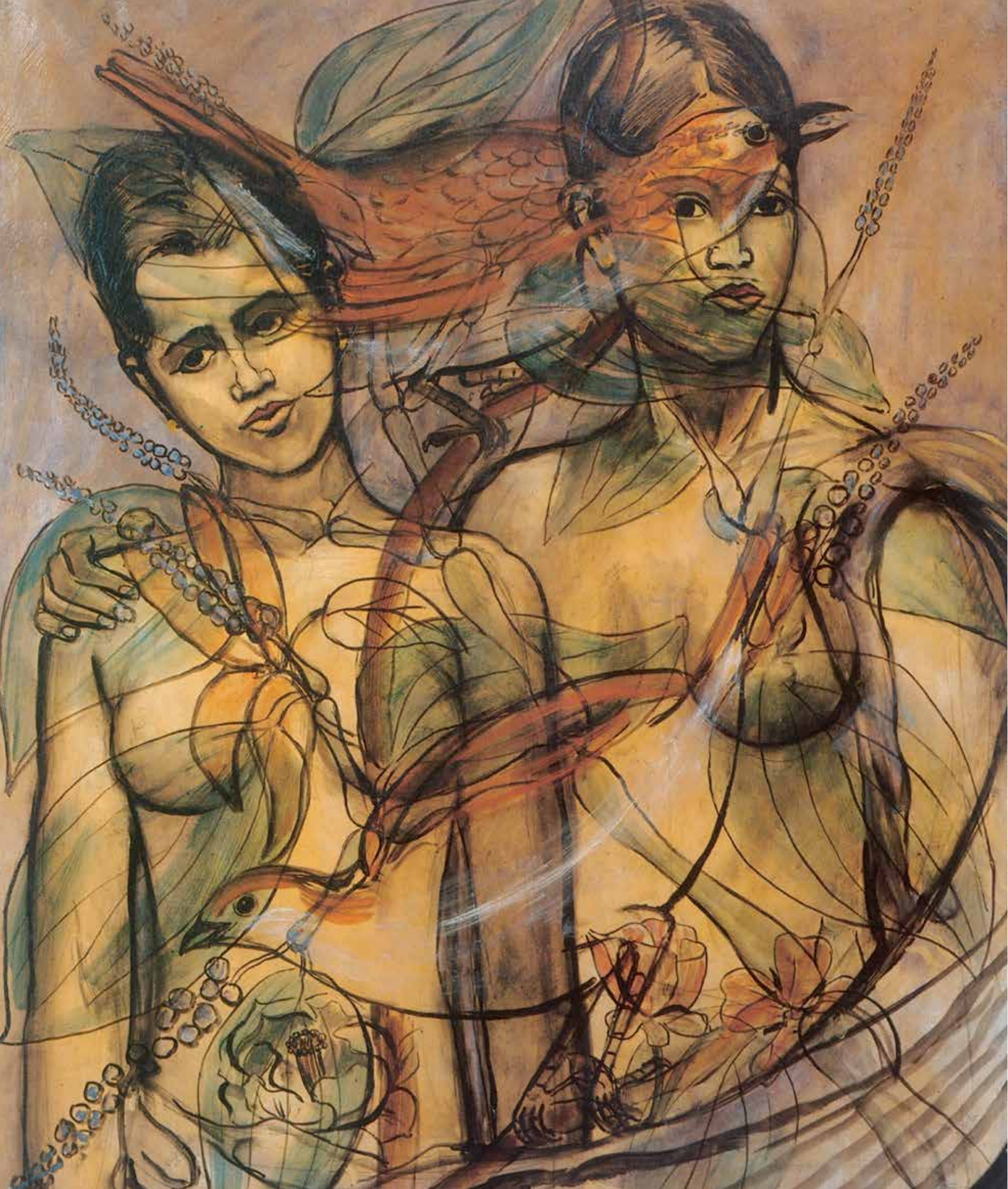




Fig. 12 La chambre de Madame Rosenberg, dans *Vogue* (Paris, octobre 1929), p. 112



Fig. 13-15 Francis Picabia, *Salicis, Pavonia et Rubi*, 1929 [cat. 1068-1070]



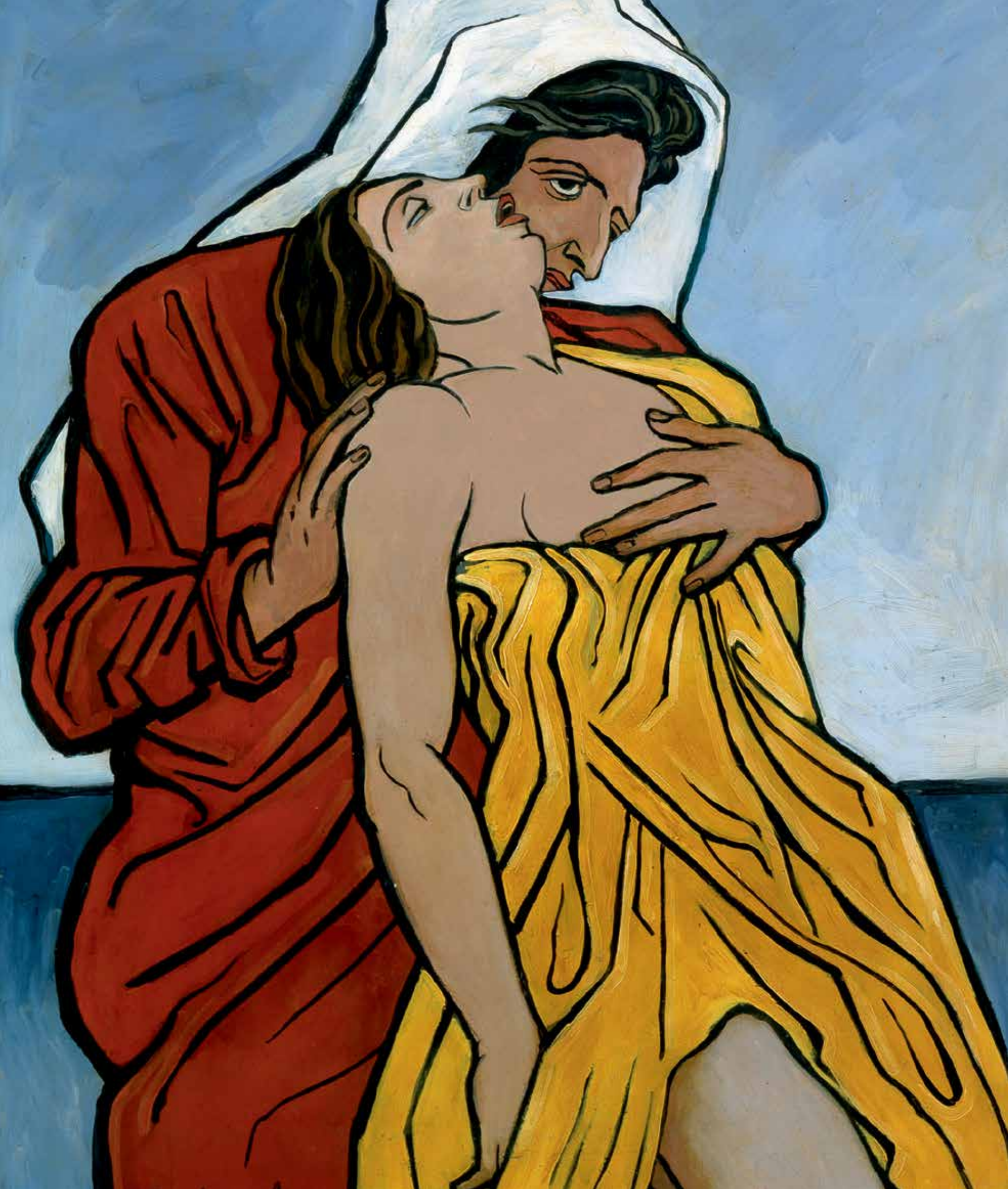
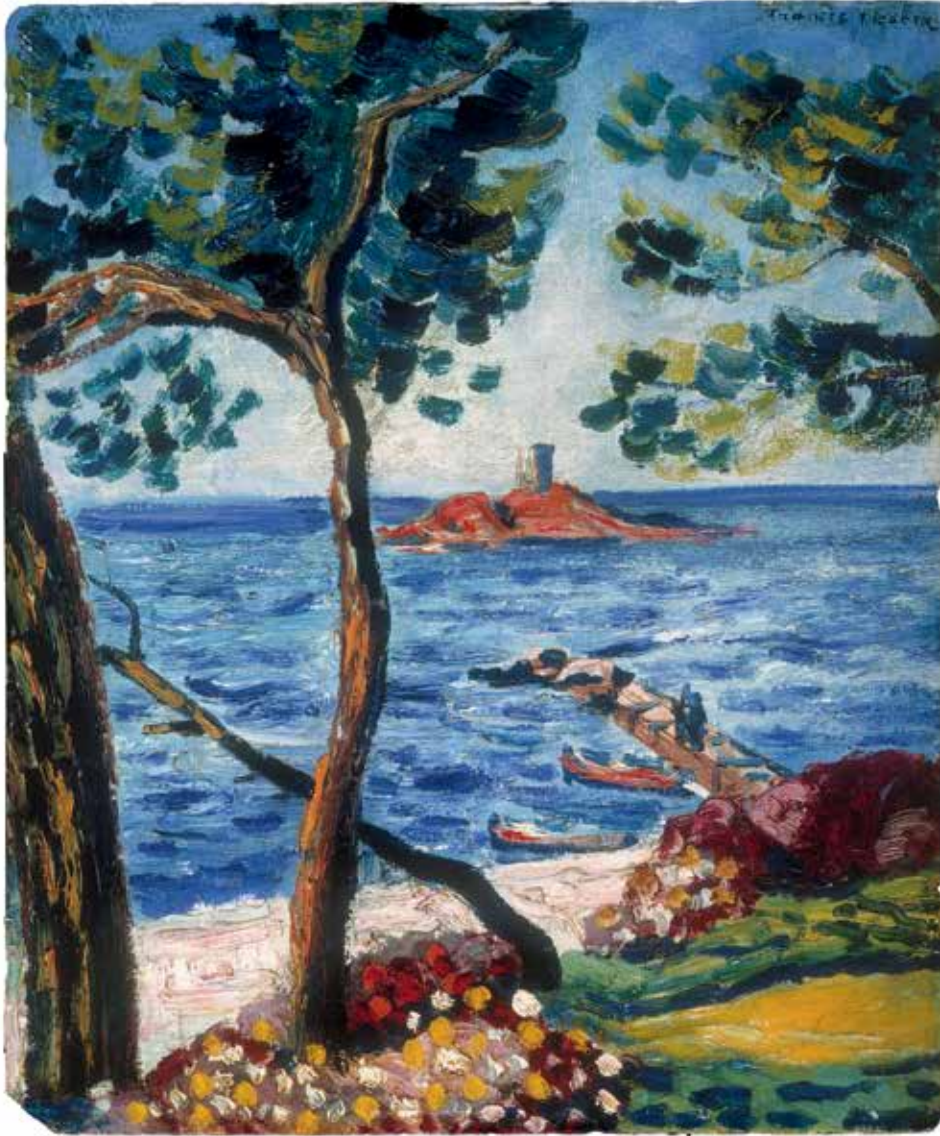




Fig.70 Francis Picabia,
La révolution espagnole, vers 1937 [cat. 1422]

◁ Fig.69 «Banderita tú eres roja...»,
carte postale colorisée, Espagne

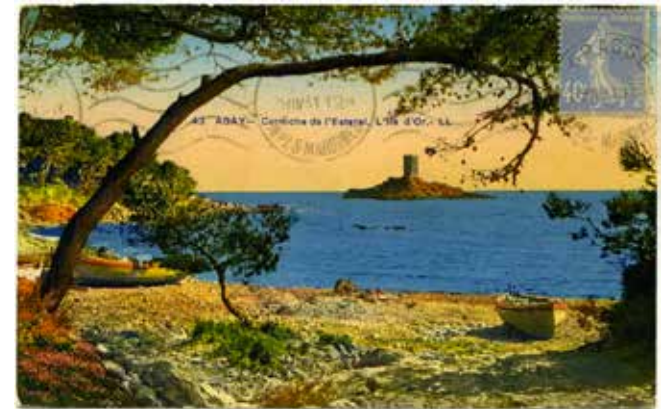


◁ Fig. 112 Francis Picabia,
Les rochers rouges, vers 1938
[cat. 1506]

celle des images de la nature. Défilent ainsi sous le pinceau de Picabia des sites et des paysages qui auront tous été, sans exception, largement diffusés par la carte postale. Celle-ci permettant d'ailleurs de préciser des lieux et des détails que les titres actuels, souvent donnés par défaut, et même certains titres de la liste de 1938, laissaient dans le vague. Le grossier truillage et la touche allusive de certains paysages obéraient, pensait-on, toute identification certaine des sites représentés ? La carte postale permet en fait d'y reconnaître sans erreur tel aspect de la Corniche d'Or ou tel autre des rochers du Trayas sur la côte de l'Esterel ; les quelques tableaux situés sur l'île Saint-Honorat, l'une des îles de Lérins au large de Cannes, montrent plus précisément le donjon de pierre de l'ancien monastère

Fig. 113 Francis Picabia,
Sans titre (*L'île d'Or*), vers 1938
[cat. 1477]

Fig. 114 « Agay – Corniche de l'Esterel »,
carte postale colorisée





1591



1592



1593



1594