David Lewis

ARTNEWS

PICABIA ALERT #5: WAVES CRASHING AT DAVID LEWIS GALLERY

BY Andrew Russeth POSTED 02/20/15

"Picabia Alert" takes note of shows that feature work by the wily French artist Francis Picabia (1879–1953), aiming to sate Picabia appetites until the Picabia retrospective opens in 2016 at the Kunsthaus Zurich and New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Francis Picabia, Notornis, 1936–38, oil on canvas, 15" x 18 ".
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID LEWIS GALLERY

The sky is dark, the water is churning, and we are out on the open sea. A gale seems to be emerging from the clouds, or perhaps that's a plane of light, or even the sail of a ship, strangely translucent. One is put in the mind of the thick waves of Hartley and the quick violence of Courbet. There may be a ship on the horizon, but it's a long way off. Picabia painted it around 1936–38. You can sense trouble. (A straightforward biographical explanation would be too simple, but around the time, Picabia's fortune was diminishing, his longtime lover Germaine Everling had recently left him, and war was, of course, brewing.)

The piece, titled Notornis (the name of a flightless bird in New Zealand thought at the time to be extinct), hangs near the entrance of New York's David Lewis Gallery, which is currently hosting "The Bar at the End of the Night (II)," an exhibition/performance venue/bar conceived by artists Lucas Knipscher and Charles Mayton—and a sequel of sorts of the same-named show they did at Los Angeles's Thomas Duncan Gallery last year with a bunch of friends. For the past month they've been slinging beers up there at Lewis, hosting live events, and making new work. The show's been growing larger and more frenetic day by day. It closes this Sunday, February 22, 2015, and it would be worth a visit even without the Picabia.

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