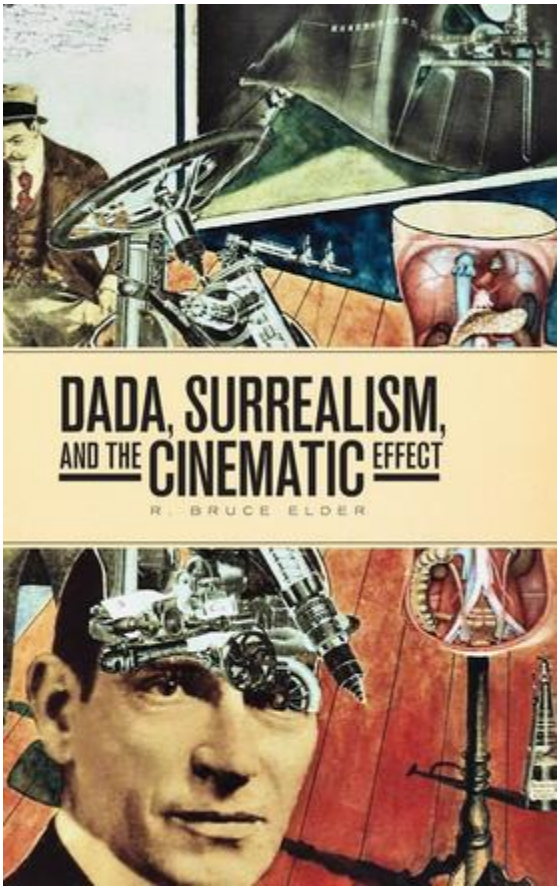

DADA, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect

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Description

This book deals with the early intellectual reception of the cinema and the manner in which art theorists, philosophers, cultural theorists, and especially artists of the first decades of the twentieth century responded to its advent. While the idea persists that early writers on film were troubled by the cinema's lowly form, this work proposes that there was another, largely unrecognized, strain in the reception of it. Far from anxious about film's provenance in popular entertainment, some writers and artists proclaimed that the cinema was the most important art for the moderns, as it exemplified the vibrancy of contemporary life.

This view of the cinema was especially common among those whose commitments were to advanced artistic practices. Their notions about how to recast the art media (or the forms forged from those media's materials) and the urgency of doing so formed the principal part of the conceptual core of the artistic programs advanced by the vanguard art movements of the first half of the twentieth century.

This book, a companion to the author's previous, *Harmony & Dissent*, examines the Dada and Surrealist movements as responses to the advent of the cinema.

Reviews

``*DADA, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect*, Bruce Elder's superb companion volume to his earlier *Harmony and Dissent*, convincingly demonstrates that for the early twentieth-century avant-garde movements, cinema was the model, the preeminent form that prompted a recasting of the other arts. This wide-ranging study shows that Dada artists created cinematic collages and transformative machines, whereas Surrealists developed the film script as a new literary genre. His brilliant analyses of Duchamp's *Anémic cinema*, Man Ray's *Retour à la raison* and *Emak Bakia*, and Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* and *Las Hurdes* are only surpassed by his intricate explication of Ernst's cinematic collage novels, which he relates as models for Lawrence Jordan's surrealist films. This is that rare book that casts the early twentieth-century avant-garde in a very new light.''

- Rudolf Kuenzli, director, International Dada Archive, University of Iowa

``Rigorously researched, the book rarely leans on established studies of DADA/surrealism, but it combines study of films of these movements with the movement's noncinematic work. Its length notwithstanding, this is a readable, informative book. Summing Up: Recommended.''

- R.P. Kinsman, Choice, January 2014

If you have an interest in any of the following six areas, you should read this book: DADA, Dada films, Surrealism, Surrealist films, Lawrence (Larry) Jordan, or logic and mathematics in relation to developments in early twentieth century art. Many books unfold in expected ways. They often contain scholarship, critical insight, and ideas that advance our understanding of their subjects. A very small number of books also propose positions which truly surprise the reader. Elder's book is an example of the latter type.

…

Dada, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect is carefully constructed to be read from the first page rather than being used as a reference book.

John W. Locke, Canadian Journal of Film Studies

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