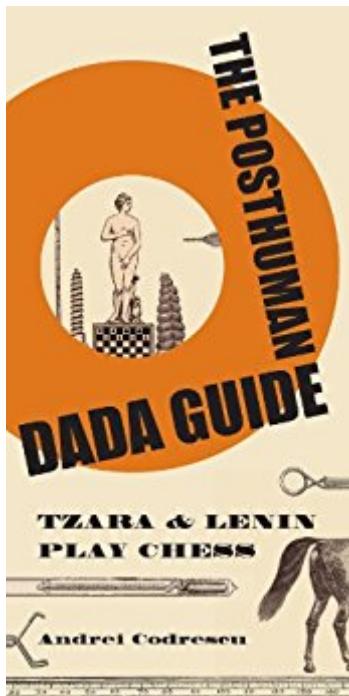


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The Posthuman Dada Guide: Tzara And Lenin Play Chess (The Public Square)



Synopsis

"This is a guide for instructing posthumans in living a Dada life. It is not advisable, nor was it ever, to lead a Dada life."--The Posthuman Dada Guide The Posthuman Dada Guide is an impractical handbook for practical living in our posthuman world--all by way of examining the imagined 1916 chess game between Tristan Tzara, the daddy of Dada, and V. I. Lenin, the daddy of communism. This epic game at Zurich's CafÃ© de la Terrasse--a battle between radical visions of art and ideological revolution--lasted for a century and may still be going on, although communism appears dead and Dada stronger than ever. As the poet faces the future mass murderer over the chessboard, neither realizes that they are playing for the world. Taking the match as metaphor for two poles of twentieth- and twenty-first-century thought, politics, and life, Andrei Codrescu has created his own brilliantly Dadaesque guide to Dada--and to what it can teach us about surviving our ultraconnected present and future. Here dadaists Duchamp, Ball, and von Freytag-Loringhoven and communists Trotsky, Radek, and Zinoviev appear live in company with later incarnations, including William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Gilles Deleuze, and Newt Gingrich. The Posthuman Dada Guide is arranged alphabetically for quick reference and (some) nostalgia for order, with entries such as "eros (women)," "internet(s)," and "war." Throughout, it is written in the belief "that posthumans lining the road to the future (which looks as if it exists, after all, even though Dada is against it) need the solace offered by the primal raw energy of Dada and its inhuman sources."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are like me, you always pay attention when Andrei Codrescu recites a commentary on National Public Radio. The man's Romanian accent is unmistakable, even though I can't help being reminded of that of Bela Lugosi and thus of Count Dracula. That Codrescu edits the website "Exquisite Corpse" helps reinforce this reference, but one must remember that "exquisite corpse" was a technique used by Dadaists to add words to a composition in sequence, not knowing what had gone before, and winding up with a sentence like, "The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine." In fact, that was one of the sentences they came up with (in French) when they first played the game, and it gave the game its name. Codrescu is devoted to Dadaists and Dadaism, and now has written The Posthuman Dada Guide: Tzara & Lenin Play Chess (Princeton University Press), which is full of tricks. "Posthuman" is a term that came in science fiction twenty years ago; we are posthumans because technological enhancements allow us to be something more than mere biological specimens. So, as the book says, "This is a guide for instructing posthumans in living a Dada life. It is not advisable, nor was it ever, to lead a Dada life." Not only that, but if you are pursuing the goal of living a Dada life, you won't find this a self-help book worth a nickel. What you might find is a bit of history of the early Dada movement and its stars, a meditation on the continuing importance of Dadaism, and a great deal of sly, desultory, and self-deprecating wordplay. Plus, it comes in a handy, long, slim volume that easily slips into the posthuman's pocket for daily consultation. "We need a guide," says the Guide, "that is at once historical and liberating. Or just hysterical and tonic.

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