



Mimi's Dada Catifesto

Shelley Jackson

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Mimi is an artistic cat in need of a human. But for a cat like her—with the soul of an artist—only an artist will do. Mr. Dada is a human who believes that art can be anything, and that anything can be art. And for a human like him—with the soul of a Dadaist—only an artistic pet will do. Sometimes, though, it takes a while for humans to see what's right in front of them all along. So it is a good thing that Mimi is loud and silly and surprising and bold. Mimi is a Dada cat, through and through.

This charming story about staying true to yourself sparkles with playful prose and stunning mixed-media illustrations while introducing readers to the Dadaist art movement. *Includes an author's note, a list of books and websites, and an index.*

Mimi's Dada Catifesto Details

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Author : Shelley Jackson

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From Reader Review Mimi's Dada Catifesto for online ebook

Robert Gowdy says

This story has an interesting take on art and the presentation of art and expression of art. Within the story the cat attempt to capture the attention of the artist by being as obnoxious and as loud and as out there as possible. It has an interesting combination of collages and montages within the story to move it along. It touches on topics such as art, self expression, self reflection, and going after what you would like even if it is difficult. I would recommend this book for grade school and up.

Leslie says

I saw Shelley Jackson's Mimi's Dada Catifesto face out on a Library display. I was intrigued as to how Dada would do in a children's picture book. However would the author/illustrator introduce the Reader to Dada, let alone explain what Dada was/is? The answer: some necessary use of oversimplification, and a marvelous "Author's Note" at the end.

"This is a Dadaist book, and so, like the Dadaists, I borrowed from many famous works of art to make it." If it were allowed, I think a photocopied set of pages of a first book constructed out of images and other found objects would have been brilliant. As it is, I think Shaun Tan in the construction of this book as well as Jennifer Bryant's *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams*, which is no insult, of course.

Speaking of William Carlos Williams, while certainly regarded as one of the greatest, if not the greatest American Modernist Poet, I was surprised to see a poem inspired by "This Is Just to Say" in a book about Dada, especially when the poem was written in 1934 and the Dada were declared "dead" in 1923 by the Surrealists (a few of whom had been Dada). Yes, yes, I know Dada is not "dead" for plenty. It just—it is not the same. And I acknowledge the fact I am arguing with a children's picture book**; one I am just glad someone attempted and pulled off. Who wants to dwell on the depressing historical context, let alone share it with a child? Not Shelley Jackson, and not most of the parents who wouldn't pick up this book, and not most of the parents who would.

Jackson is looking for accessibility and this illustrated piece is that, whether the Reader is a child or adult. In the "Author's Note" Jackson walks the Reader back through the book, enumerating her sources, "Mimi's art show was inspired by Marcel Duchamp, who invented the "ready-made," "The costumes of Mr. Dada and his friend are inspired by Hugo Ball's costumes." A passion and a lively sense of humor lift from the text and artwork. Mimi's Dada Catifesto is a fun book.

In addition to a narrative, an artistic cat looking to live alongside an artistic human, Jackson inserts games and activities. Count the peas on a page, host a "ready-made" exhibit, and create a poem from clipped-out words. Ideally, someone would have marked in this Library book already, have already pasted their bits of cut-out words to form a poem on the appropriate page. And then the next Reader should paste over a few words and add some at weird angles between the already there. Yes, I am very definitely tempted.

"The world was full of silly things in 1915, just like now (umbrellas! bow ties! false teeth!), but most art ignored the silliness. To the Dadaists, that was the silliest thing of all."*

Dada is in many ways suited to the young audience Jackson is targeting. Apparently silliness abounds, from the sound poems to the costumes to the raucous performances to the indecipherability of action. The assertions that “art can be anything and anything can be art” to “They thought that when you understand something, you stop thinking about it. Not understanding is much more interesting,” to “The Dadaists made art out of everything. Pieces of newspapers, ads, junk they found on the street—even other works of art.” Jackson examples Marcel Duchamp’s 1919 parody of da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, notably ignoring the added inscription and it’s coarse implication. What an exciting idea, though, right? Art within reach, Art without criticism, while being criticism. Anyone can be a dada. “Many cats are Dadaists.”

In this beautifully ambitious picture book, Shelley Jackson creates a fun introduction to Dada. She begins with beginners and pairs dadaist venues with a sweet story. Not unlike the cat, Dada is also looking for a place to belong. It is a stray beast, a bold and sassy figure, who finds the sacrifices for the sake of integrity and dignity well worth the while. Mimi is told as long as she behaves 1, 2, & 3, all will be well (i.e. purr; look cute; don’t wash your behind while they’re watching). She cannot compromise. There is something at stake. Dada was her response. Dada is her voice.

If you are looking for an unusual subject for an informative yet narrative-driven picture book, especially within the realm of Art, Mimi’s Dada Catifesto is a must. Even if you aren’t, do give Shelley Jackson marvelous little creation a chance. This one would be fun to own, collaborate with, and lend out to friends to make their own additions; then perhaps a soiree? We can deal with the historical, the political, contexts later.

note: a premise is added to the review on my blog-site (addressed below)

L @ omphaloskepsis
<http://contemplatrix.wordpress.com/20...>

Thurston Hunger says

I'm a better Dad than a Dadaist, but I feel this book will be fun for both. The idea of ready-made art can be an argument ready to be made, but this book focuses on the fun, frolicsome side of such an argument. Others may champion DuChamp, but I'm here only to thank Shelley Jackson. Our second graders enjoyed having this book read to them, and we did review the nice author's note at the end. I had only known Archy and Mehitabel as our neighbors' cats growing up, so now I know there their names came from. And a hello to the Hugets wherever they are.

At the core, art and fun are two excellent three-letter building blocks for any life. And should be involved right after the ABC's in my book. As for a master's thesis, that's another book. And not likely a picture book.

John says

I think most K-2 students would have a difficult time following its organization.

Lily says

This may be my favorite picture book. A stray cat seeks the companionship of a dada artist by proving she is truly the epitome of dada by performing very catlike behavior. PERFECT.

Peacegal says

Absolutely ridiculous, surreal, and fun--just like Dada. Introduce yourself, a child, or a cat to an art movement with this very unique book.

Rebecca says

Who can resist a cover with a bright orange mustachio'd cat on it? This book is also about an artistic cat searching for a human while doing a pretty good job of explaining the Dada art movement. Quite unique.

"Only art that does not look like art is art."

"They are art because I say so."

Includes an Author's Note explaining the many references, and list of additional resources.

Danielle says

Please don't ask me to try to explain what Dada is--go ask Mimi. For years I have tried to comprehend Dadaism, and I never could quite grasp until now. I was even a volunteer for three years at an annual Dada ball. Dada isn't completely graspable-that is the point. There is so much to this book in all the little details, and Jackson really captures the essence of Dada. The silliness and freedom of Dadaism will be inspire kids to create their own Dada art.

Shelli says

If takes a lot for this book lover to not finish a book, especially a small picture book. I could not bring myself to finish this. Even my daughter, who normally insists we finish, said we should not bother.

Kirsten Murphy says

I don't think my young students would be able to follow and understand the organization of this book so it's not one I will recommend. The art teacher might appreciate it.

Tatiana says

This bizarre picture book is indescribably weird, strange and silly all at the same time. My head is still reeling from trying to comprehend this beautifully illustrated book. Thank goodness for the afterword that briefly explains the Dada movement, and the extras such as book lists and websites. It probably requires another reading (or two) for me to grasp this unique nugget of children's books, but I'll try again later - much later.

Recommended for students grades 4th and up, and for those studying art.

Lydia Theobald says

As is expected with any literature treating Dadaism, this book is a little snobby in the cutest way.

Alana says

Oh dear goodness, this book makes me wish that I knew a bunch of kids who were (a) not too old for picture books and (b) old enough to understand Dadaism. I'm not sure if those are mutually exclusive qualities, but *Mimi's Dada Catifesto* is an absolutely stunning tribute to this particular art form.

Mimi is a cat living in a top hat (with two cockroaches that live in the brim). She has a pigeon for a friend, and one night, she sees a Dadaist artist and knows she's finally found her human. She tries to show him that she is a kindred spirit in his dadaist movement but he doesn't always realize hairballs left on his doorstep are works of art. The little details are what make this book a true gem. Seriously. The newspaper whiskers might be the best thing ever.

Eyehavenofilter says

This is definitely a DADA book. Since no one can really agree what Dada really is, I'm ok with that. It's really art in its most experimental phase. It's Andy Warhol's inspiration on how to make money with art! Anyway back to the book.

Mimi is a city cat with a day to day existence, trying to find a way to make her life better.

She has the good fortune to jump into the middle of artist Dada's act and endear herself to him in the most absurdist ways. They instantly connect and they have found their equals.

Colorfully illustrated in collage, watercolor, newsprint, and many layers of each, with hats on pigeons, shoes flying in the air, words in French, Italian and other Dadaist terms, this captures the movement for kids of all ages.

And it has a cat! What more could you ask for?

Matthew says

This book was weird. It was supposed to be and it passed that test with flying colors. I was only barely able to keep up with this odd plot. The book was about this strange art movement called Dadaism that seeks to prove that all the world is art. They do it by calling bizarre performance pieces and general randomness art. The end explained the goal of the movement. That was the only part that I truly understood. I'm not crazy about Dadaism, but I guess this book did its job.
