

Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable
April 6–September 17, 2023

“This woman is half-way through the door into To-morrow,” reported the *New York Sun* about Mina Loy in 1917. The British artist and poet Mina Loy had recently arrived in New York, but she turned heads on both sides of the Atlantic with her feminist manifesto and bold poetry and artwork. An active member of the international avant-garde, she published in leading journals and exhibited in noteworthy New York galleries. Over the course of her peripatetic career, Loy was largely enigmatic. But she maintained relationships with other creative pioneers including Berenice Abbott, Djuna Barnes, Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Man Ray, and Gertrude Stein. After moving to Aspen where she spent the final years of her life, she largely disappeared from view.

While recognized during her lifetime and in recent decades as a formidable voice in modern poetry, Loy has never received comparable attention as a visual artist, an oversight this exhibition aims to rectify. As *Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable* demonstrates, Loy worked at the intersection of word and image, fine art and design, language and invention. Radicalizing the aspirations of feminism, expanding the horizons of Surrealism, and presaging American pop art with her assemblage constructions, Loy helped to redefine creative practice through her refusal to acknowledge boundaries and by embracing the very “strangeness” that helps us to see the world in a new light.

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I. EARLY LIFE
1882–1906

Born Mina Gertrude Lowy in 1882, Mina Loy was the daughter of Sigmund Lowy, a non-observant Jewish Hungarian immigrant and Julia Bryan, a conservative, working-class English woman. As a precocious youth with artistic aspirations, her creative inclinations did not sit well with her conventional mother, whereas her father, a successful tailor and amateur painter, recognized his eldest daughter's creative talent and supported her ambition to attend art school. She first studied in London, and subsequently in Munich and Paris. It was at the Académie Colarossi in Paris that Loy discovered her first creative cohort, which included the artist Stephen Haweis, who would become her first husband, as well as Wyndham Lewis and Jules Pascin, both of whom became long-term supporters of her avant-garde work. In Paris, Loy received early recognition for her paintings and drawings, leading to her prestigious appointment as a *Sociétaire* of the *Salon d'Automne* in 1906. She would leave Paris later that year, following the death of her first child.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Devant le Miroir, 1905
graphite on brown paper mounted on cardboard
16 x 13 in. (40.64 x 33.02 cm)
Collection Roger Conover

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Gallery Labels

Ushered into the art world in Paris as a student at the Académie Colarossi, Mina Loy formed a relationship with fellow student Stephen Haweis, who recognized Loy's talent and promoted her career. The couple married and a daughter, Oda, was born at virtually the same moment Loy's work was selected for the prestigious Salon d'Automne. But within a year of Loy's first significant recognition as an artist, her infant daughter perished from meningitis. As though reckoning with herself following this tragedy, Loy captured her somber countenance in *Devant le Miroir* (In Front of the Mirror). The drawing renders the air of cool—perhaps self-protective—aloofness that Loy would assume throughout the duration of her life. “[S]he wears a blind gaze among us as though she has contemplated the Gorgon—a look as if struck with indifference, the feminist writer and salonnière Natalie Barney would later write of her friend.

STEPHEN HAWEIS (1878–1969)

(Clockwise from upper left)



Mina Loy, ca. 1905-9
7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)
gelatin silver print



Mina Loy Holding Auguste Rodin Sculpture, ca. 1905-9
5 x 8 in. (12.7 x 20.32 cm)
gelatin silver print



Mina Loy, ca. 1905-9
gelatin silver print
10 x 8 in (25.4 x 20.32 cm)
Private Collection



Mina Loy, ca. 1905-9
7 x 5 in. (17.78 x 12.7 cm)
gelatin silver print

Loy's first husband, the British painter Stephen Haweis, was also a successful photographer. Shortly after opening an art photography studio in Paris with Henry Coles, Auguste Rodin commissioned the pair to produce over two hundred photographs of his sculptures, and Alfred Stieglitz famously printed their images of Rodin's *Balzac* in his journal, *Camera Work*. Haweis took these captivating pictures of Loy around 1905. Her coy expressions and provocative postures reveal her as an astute collaborator deliberately drawing attention to her sexuality, while also challenging the viewer's expectations of femininity.

Case 1



1) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Lowy, her mother Julia Bryan Lowy, and her sister Dora Lowy, ca. 1886
gelatin silver print (facsimile)
Private Collection

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2) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Sigmund Lowy, ca. 1890
gelatin silver print (facsimile)
Location unknown



3) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy as a Girl, ca. 1886
gelatin silver print (facsimile)
Private Collection



4) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy, ca. 1897
gelatin silver print (facsimile)
Private Collection



5) HENRI JOEL LE SAVOUREUX (1881–1961)
Stephen Haweis and Mina Loy in Art School, ca. 1905
photograph (facsimile)
Location unknown



6) ATTRIBUTED TO MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled, ca. 1900
mixed media
Collection of J. and J. Gordon.



7) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Women in Carriage, ca. 1907
mixed media
8 x 8 in. (27.32 x 20.32 cm)
Collection of J. and J. Gordon



8) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Portrait of Stephen Haweis, ca. 1905
pencil (facsimile)

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11176126>

Gallery Labels



9) STEPHEN HAWEIS (1878–1969)

Mina Loy, ca. 1905
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover



10) STEPHEN HAWEIS (1878–1969)

Mina Loy, ca. 1905
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Sociétaire du Salon d'Automne calling card, Paris, ca. 1906
ink on paper
Collection of J. and J. Gordon

In May of 1904, the same year that Loy's first daughter Oda was born, six of Loy's watercolors were included in the *Salon d'Automne*. This event had been launched the preceding year for innovative artists who refused to be constrained by the conservative tendencies of the official Paris Salon; it continues to be held annually. Loy's work was subsequently included in the *Salon d'Automne* in 1905, 1906, 1913, and 1923. As this calling card reflects, she was elected a member of its drawing society (in 1906); she served as a juror in 1912.

Paul Jamot's 1906 review in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* drew attention to the provocative tension implicit in her work: "Miss Mina Loy ... in her strange watercolors ... shows us ambiguous ephebes whose nudity is caressed by ladies in the furbelows of 1885." Jamot's discomfort suggests his sensitivity to the conventions that Loy was determined to subvert and to questions she was determined to raise in her work.



12) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Stephen Haweis, Studio Portrait, 1926
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover

II. FEMINIST AND FUTURIST 1906–1916

In the wake of the tragic death of her first child, Loy sought relief by consulting the psychiatrist and amateur photographer, Dr. Henri Joel Le Savoureux. The two began an affair, leading to a second pregnancy. Stephen Haweis, agreed to "accept" the child as his own, but only if she left Paris and gave him a child of their own. Accordingly, Loy accompanied Haweis to Florence, Italy where she gave birth to daughter Joella in 1907 and son Giles in 1909.

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Gallery Labels

Loy's sojourn in Italy exposed her to the revolutionary artistic and literary movement of Futurism which used pictorial and verbal abstraction to espouse new technologies and to condemn the values and cultural norms of the past. Loy's intellectual involvement with Futurism led to liaisons with its two principal but competing leaders: the critic and philosopher Giovanni Papini, the self-proclaimed "ugliest man in Italy," and the poet and theorist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, possibly the loudest.

In Florence, Loy formed lasting relationships with new friends and patrons—including Mabel Dodge (later Mabel Dodge Luhan)—who supported and encouraged her writing and artwork for many years to come. It was there, through Dodge, that Loy met Gertrude Stein and her companion, Alice B. Toklas for the first time. Despite the turbulence of World War I, the energetic and ambitious young modernist became an integral part of the Florentine expatriate scene and the artistic and literary culture of the international avant-garde.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
L'Amour Dorlote par les Belles Dames [Love Among the Ladies,] before 1906
Watercolor
19 3/4 x 12 1/2 in. (50.17 x 31.75 cm)

Collection Roger Conover

In the 1915 issue of *Rogue* magazine, photographer Carl van Vechten described the distinctive painting methods Loy used in the development of this watercolor: "The paintings of Mina Loy seem to the beholder the strange creations of a vagrant fancy One day on the beach at the Lido she saw a young man in a bathing suit lying stretched on the sand with his head in the lap of a beautiful woman. Other women surrounded the two. The group immediately suggested a composition to her. She went home and painted. She took the young man's bathing suit off and the women she dressed in lovely floating robes..." The refinement and animation of detail in this work also characterize *La Maison en Papier*, *The Beach*, and *Maison des bains au Forte dei Marmi* which hang nearby.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Fashion Designs, ca. 1915
watercolor and gouache
14 x 20 1/2 in. (35.56 x 52.07 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Fille en robe rouge, 1913
watercolor with graphite
19 1/2 x 15 1/2 in. (49.53 x 39.37 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Maison des bains au Forte dei Marmi, ca. 1913
gouache and ink with traces of graphite on paper mounted on cardboard
Collection Roger Conover

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MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Beach, ca. 1911
watercolor and graphite
20 x 25 in. (50.8 x 63.5 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
La Maison en Papier, 1906
gouache and graphite
19 3/4 x 12 1/2 in. (50.17 x 31.75 cm).
Private Collection

During her ascendancy as a writer, Loy demonstrated a keen interest in the female body, and in ways of enhancing its health and appearance through design and invention, including fashion design. The entrepreneurial artist gave numerous proposals for clothing and dress designs, such as these, to her friends, Carl Van Vechten and Peggy Guggenheim, to take to New York in the hope that they could secure access for her clothing designs from the fashion industry. While this did not happen, Loy continued to work at the intersection of art and design, and to pursue her investigations of and inventions for the female body throughout her career.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Aphorisms on Futurism” (facsimile)
Camera Work 45, January 1914

Two of Mina Loy’s most ardent friends and supporters in Florence, Mabel Dodge (later Mabel Dodge Luhan) and Carl Van Vechten, delivered her Futurist-inflected poems to the United States. Upon seeing them in print, Ezra Pound found the need to coin a new term to describe them: *logopoeia*, or “poetry... akin to nothing but language which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas.” The New York avant-garde affirmed her role as the harbinger of Futurism, Dada, and unprecedented linguistic scandal. Loy first saw her name in print in January of 1914, when Alfred Stieglitz published her manifesto “Aphorisms on Futurism” in *Camera Work*. The text was an incantation about self, a mediation on individual potential and self-determination achieved by radically cutting off one’s past and resisting reflexive behavior in the future. The text layout was typographically inspired by Futurism. More of her writing would soon appear in *Rogue*, published by Allen and Louise Norton, and in Alfred Kreyborg’s *Others*, setting the stage for Loy’s arrival in New York.

Case 2



1) F.T. MARINETTI (1876–1944)
“T.S.F.: telefono senza fili: wireless,” 1914

Excerpted from a longer shaped poem: “Hadirlik quartier generale turco,” originally published in *Zang Tumb Tumb: Adrianopoli Ottobre 1912: Parole in Libertà*, 1914

Reprinted in *Folio Sheet from Shaped Poetry*, San Francisco: Arion Press, 1981

George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College

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- 2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Two Plays,” *Rogue*, August 15, 1915 (facsimile)
Private collection



- 3) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Feminist Manifesto,” holograph manuscript, corrected, 1914 (facsimile)
Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers.
Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2041800>



- 4) PITTORI E SCULTORI FUTURISTI (brochure)
Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale, Rome, April/May 1914 (facsimile)
Collection of Francis M. Naumann and Marie T. Keller, Yorktown Heights, New York

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published his *Manifesto of Futurism* in February 1909. The following year, the painter Umberto Boccioni took the lead in publishing the *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto*, to which various fellow artists contributed. The document advocated for a synthetic art that broke down the boundaries between painting and sculpture, music and poetry. “The only truth is creation,” asserted Boccioni. Working in a similar spirit, Marinetti introduced Loy to the power wielded through the declarative word, which eventually caught the imagination of many painters. “Instead of ‘free verse’ Marinetti proposed ‘free words,’ *parole in libertà* ... Words were organized like evocative images in a painting.” The art of the Futurists motivated Loy to test her hand at the movement’s fragmented and energetic style of painting. She contributed three portraits of Marinetti to *The First Free Exhibition of International Futurist Art in Rome* (1914).



- 5) LE CRAPOUILLOT
November 15, 1923
Private Collection



- 6) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled drawing, ca. 1915, published in *Le Crapouillet*, ca. 1915
Collection of Roger Conover



- 7) ALLEN NORTON (1878?–1945?), Editor
Rogue 1, April 1, 1915
Private Collection



- 8) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots (poem)
CLARA TICE (1888–1973)

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Virgin Minus Verse (illustration) (facsimile)

Rogue, August 15, 1915

Collection of Roger Conover



9) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Babies in Hospitals (poem)

Consider Your Grandmother's Stays (illustration)

Rogue, November 1916 (facsimile)

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

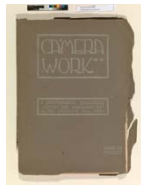


10) DJUNA BARNES (1892–1982)

Trend Magazine 8

October 1914 (cover) (facsimile)

Trend Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library



11) ALFRED STIEGLITZ, editor

American, 1864–1946

Camera Work 45, January 1914

Collection of Roger Conover

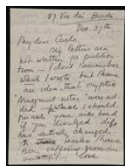


12) MARK LUTZ (1901–1969)

Portrait of Carl Van Vechten, at the Villa Curonia, Florence, June 22, 1935
(facsimile)

gelatin silver print

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC, LC-USZ62-137893



13) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Mina Loy Letter to Carl Van Vechten, December 17, ca. 1914 (facsimile)

ink on paper

Carl Van Vechten Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2043789>



14) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Mina Loy letter to Mabel Dodge. September 17, ca. 1910 (facsimile)

Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10000282>

Preoccupied by the humiliation of her marriage and poor health, Loy maintained a subdued presence in Florence until meeting the American heiress and arts patron Mabel Dodge (later Mabel Dodge Luhan) in 1910. Loy characterized her life in these years as moving slowly from one “of shilly-shallying shyness...to expansiveness under the luxury of Mabel Dodge’s trees.” She and Dodge became fast friends, and Dodge encouraged her art and earliest writings.



15) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Maternity, 1935
terracotta sculpture, now lost
documentary photograph (facsimile)
Private Collection



16) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina and Joella, 1909
gelatin silver print
Private collection

During her infancy, Joella contracted polio, prompting her mother, Mina Loy, to turn to a Christian Science practitioner. When Joella recovered, Loy became a person of unconventional faith, developing a complex belief system that would position her outside mainstream modernist thought.



17) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina and Joella, ca. 1908
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover

In this photograph, Mina Loy wears a hat of her own design. Clothing design would remain of great interest to her throughout her life.



18) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Mina Loy Letter to Stephen Haweis, March 22 or 27, 1914 (facsimile)
Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17085373>

III. NEW YORK 1916–1918

In October 1916, for the first time in her life, Loy arrived in a new city under her own agency. She was immediately welcomed into the modernist circles that coalesced around literary editors Louise and Allen Norton, publisher Alfred Kreymborg, and art patrons Walter and Louise Arensberg. That autumn, through Marcel Duchamp, whom she often met at the Arensbergs' salon, she became a contributor to the canonical Dada journal, *The Blind Man*, edited by Duchamp, Henri-Pierré Roche, and Beatrice Wood. Among the other creatives she met in New York were photographer Man Ray, poets Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams and his wife, Florence ("Flossie"), the sculptor William Zorach, and the playwright Eugene O'Neill. Together with many of her new comrades, Loy attended the legendary Blind Man's Ball, held in honor of the launch of the eponymous publication. Loy dressed as a lampshade, in a costume of her own making, in which garment she met the poet-boxer Arthur Cravan for the first time. Although it was not love at first sight, the proto-Dadaist soon swept her off her feet, leading to a passionate but tragically doomed love affair between the elusive *homme fatal* and the irresistible *femme vitale*.



BEATRICE WOOD (1893–1998)

Poster for The Blind Man's Ball, Webster Hall, New York City, 1917

color lithograph and relief print (poster)

Private Collection

In May 1917, the Blind Man's Ball celebrated the publication of the groundbreaking Dada journal, *The Blind Man* (on view in the adjacent case). Although only two issues were published, this “little magazine”—a term applied to experimental art and literary journals of the period—achieved legendary status. In its pages appeared a witty and sophisticated justification of Marcel Duchamp's pioneering work *Fountain* (consisting of a urinal reconceptualized as art), which revolutionized the very meaning of art. The piece simultaneously revealed the hypocrisy of artist-jurors who rejected it from the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists despite a pledge to exhibit all submissions. In this simple but expressive poster, designed by Beatrice Wood, a co-editor together with Marcel Duchamp and Henri Pierre Roché, of *The Blind Man*, the figure on the poster, clearly thumbing its nose at viewers, playfully conveys the rebellious spirit of a new generation of artists, ready to overturn the status quo. The marauding jester echoes the image of the framed artwork on the first volume of *The Blind Man*, intended to implicate, through ridicule, those who would move around the world in a deliberately blind and somnolent state, unwilling to awake and see the world for what it is.

BEATRICE WOOD (1893–1998)



Lit de Marcel (Beatrice Wood; Marcel Duchamp, Mina Loy, Charles Demuth, Aileen Dresser), 1917

watercolor

8 3/4 x 5 3/4 in. (22.23 x 14.61 cm).

Collection of Francis M. Naumann and Marie T. Keller, Yorktown Heights, New York



Mina Loy and Arthur Cravan, 1991

Drawing

17 x 13 1/2 in. (43.18 x 34.29 cm)

Collection Roger Conover



Untitled, 1991

colored pencil

Collection Roger Conover



Mina Loy and Arthur Cravan, 1990

drawing

Collection Roger Conover

Following a delightfully raucous evening at The Blind Man's Ball (see the accompanying poster), which Mina Loy had attended playfully dressed a lampshade (see photo in the adjacent case)—reflecting a deep interest in instruments of illumination that would continue throughout her career—Loy, Beatrice Wood, Charles Demuth, Aileen Dresser, and Marcel Duchamp collapsed together on Duchamp's bed. Beatrice Wood, captured the exuberant exhaustion in her playful watercolor. A similar spirit of joyful

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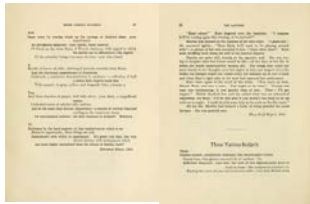
energy infuses Wood's later drawings, made in 1991, which reflect her memories of the intense passion that united Mina Loy and Arthur Cravan, who fell in love in the weeks following *The Blind Man's Ball*.

Case 3



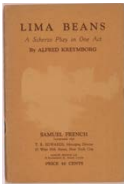
1) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Bust-Length Portrait of Marianne Moore, ca. 1916
pencil on wove paper
6 1/8 x 3 1/2 in. (15.56 x 8.89 cm).
The Rosenbach, Philadelphia

Marianne Moore and Mina Loy were recognized by their peers and subsequent generations of writers and scholars as two of the most formidable modernist poets of their generation. William Carlos Williams noted, “Of all those writing poetry in America at the time she was here Marianne Moore was the only one Mina Loy feared. By divergent virtues these two women have achieved freshness of presentation, novelty, freedom, break with banality.”



2) MARIANNE MOORE (1887–1972)
“Those Various Scalpels,” 1917 (facsimile)
In *The Lantern* (later published in *Contact Magazine*, January 1921)
Bryn Mawr College Libraries, Special Collections

In Marianne Moore’s sizing up of Loy in *Those Various Scalpels*, the poet raises the question of whether Loy’s incisiveness was a military offensive or a surgical cure. In hindsight, it appears that it was a bit of both. Loy’s unrelentingly critical eye surveyed the worlds of art, culture, politics, society, and herself. Her response could be as withering as they were revelatory, commanding the New York avant-garde’s attention to her every word. Years later, in the April 1925 edition of *Charm*, Loy was even unsparing of Moore, one of the few poets to whose abilities Loy might have conceded some favor, noting that Moore’s poetics, “suggest the soliloquies of a library clock.” In a similar spirit, she once compared the experience of reading T.S. Eliot’s translations of Valéry to the sensation of “falling down a vegetarian’s lavatory.”



3) ALFRED KREYMBORG (1883–1966)
Script for the play *Lima Beans*
December 1916



4) *Lima Beans* program, December 1916 (facsimile)



5) Mina Loy and William Carlos Williams in Alfred Kreymborg's *Lima Beans* as staged at the Provincetown Playhouse, December 1916 (facsimile of published photograph)
Private Collection

Loy began to act with the Provincetown Players soon after arriving in New York. She debuted in Alfred Kreymborg's *Lima Beans* alongside William Carlos Williams. The short play, featuring lima and green beans as conduits of love, was noteworthy for lines delivered in free verse with pantomime movement. Loy's self-designed costume was the *succès de scandale* of the evening due to her unusual stocking-shaped hat and plunging neckline. The set, reminiscent of the checkerboard cover of *Rogue*, and perhaps also referencing Kreymborg's own mastery of chess, was designed by Marguerite and William Zorach. Marianne Moore, who rivaled Loy for the attention her poetry received, was in attendance. She noted, somewhat condescendingly, that Loy was "very beautiful" and "enunciated beautifully." Their pre-show meeting may have inspired Moore's 1917 poem about Loy, "Those Various Scalpels."



6) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Arthur Cravan
from *The Soil: A Magazine of Art*, April 1917 (facsimile)
photograph

Collection of Roger Conover

This photograph of Arthur Cravan was included in *The Soil: A Magazine of Art* in April 1917 (in adjacent case) shortly before he met Mina Loy. The photograph ran opposite an unsigned article describing Cravan's bout with Jack Johnson a year earlier, on April 23, 1916. Organized in Barcelona, the fight went six rounds before Cravan fell to Johnson.



7) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy dressed for the Blindman's Ball, 1917 (facsimile)
gelatin silver print

On May 25, 1917, Mina Loy joined a coterie of friends and headed for the Blindman's Ball at Greenwich Village's Webster Hall. The glamorous artist went in the guise of a lampshade, wearing a self-designed costume that reflected her abiding interest in instruments of illumination. Having recently started a lampshade business in New York (one she would later continue in Paris), Loy playfully referenced her new venture not only through her sartorial style, but also through the title of the artwork she had entered into the inaugural Independents Exhibition (which would be lampooned by the journal *The Blind Man*): *Making Lampshades*.



8) MARCEL DUCHAMP, co-editor (1887–1968)
HENRI PIERRE ROCHÉ, co-editor (1879–1959)
BEATRICE WOOD, co-editor (1893–1998)
The Blind Man, No. 1, April 1917
Volume 1, 8 pages

Museum Purchase in collaboration with the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives: Barbara Cooney Porter Fund, Lloyd O. and Marjorie Strong Coulter

Fund, Bowdoin College Museum of Art; The Philip Conway Beam Endowment Fund, Bowdoin College Museum of Art; and The Stones-Pickard Special Editions Book Fund, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library
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Published in only two issues in the spring of 1917, *The Blind Man* (spelled differently on the cover of each of the numbers) nevertheless achieved legendary status. The “little magazine”—a term applied to experimental art and literary journals of the period—included the voices of many of the leading artists and literary figures of the era including its editors—Beatrice Wood, Marcel Duchamp and Henri Pierre Roché—and others, such as Mina Loy, Charles Demuth, Louise Norton, and Alfred Stieglitz. The May 1917 issue became particularly famous and important for its publication of “The Richard Mutt Case,” a witty and sophisticated justification of Marcel Duchamp’s pioneering work *Fountain* (consisting of a urinal reconceptualized as art), which revolutionized the very meaning of art. The piece simultaneously revealed the hypocrisy of artist-jurors who rejected it from the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists despite a pledge to exhibit all submissions.



9) ALFRED STIEGLITZ (1864–1946)
MARCEL DUCHAMP (1887–1968)
HENRI-PIERRE ROCHÉ (1879–1959)
BEATRICE WOOD (1893–1998)
Fountain and “The Richard Mutt Case,” both 1917

The Blind Man, no. 2 (1917)

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2019.49.2

URL: https://monoskop.org/images/6/6f/The_Blind_Man_2_May_1917.pdf



Marcel Duchamp’s 1917 *Fountain*, submitted to the “First Annual Exhibition” of the Society of Independents Artists (SIA) in April 1917 as a work by the fictitious “Richard Mutt” is today the best remembered work from the show, although it was never put on view. The object caused an uproar when the Society of Independent Artists refused to exhibit it, violating their own policy of absolute freedom for those paying the required submission fee. Duchamp promptly resigned from the Board of the SIA. The resulting defense of *Fountain*, “The Richard Mutt Case,” published in the pages of volume 2 of *The Blind Man*, has made this “little magazine” one of the most important in the history of art. Co-authored anonymously by Marcel Duchamp, Beatrice Wood, and Henri-Pierre Roché, the short article emphasized the important transformation to the “readymade” urinal made by Duchamp in “creat[ing] a new thought for that object.” This paradigmatic change paved the way to understand art as idea, a principle to which Mina Loy, in her work as a poet, visual artist, and inventor would adhere. – Intriguingly, the object—lost shortly after its submission was known for many years only as a memory, preserved in the accompanying photograph by Stieglitz, until Duchamp authorized new versions of the piece at mid-century.

Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable | Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Gallery Labels



10) BEATRICE WOOD (1893–1998)
“Why I Come to the Independents”
“Work of a Picture Hanger”
“Dream of a Picture Hanger”

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“In ... Formation”
The Blind Man, No. 1, April 1917



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Oh, Marcel—otherwise: I Also Have Been to Louise’s”
The Blind Man, No. 2, May 1917



12) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy Passport Photo, 1916 (facsimile)
photograph
Private Collection



13) UNIDENTIFIED AUTHOR
“Do you Strive to Capture the Symbols of your Reactions? If Not You are Quite Old Fashioned”
New York Sun, February 13, 1917 (facsimile)

The press soon identified the polymath artist and convention busting Loy as the quintessential modern woman. The author of this article writes: “Mina Loy writes free verse but does many other things, too. Who is she, where is she, what is she—this ‘modern woman’ that people are always talking about? Is there any such creature?” Later the question was definitively answered: “She can and does write free verse and hold the intuitional pause exactly the right length of time ... She can and does paint lampshades and magazine covers. She can and does act, design her own stage and social costumes ... she is particularly proud of the fact that, like Columbus, she was discovered by America ... This woman is half-way through the door into To-morrow.”



14) ALFRED KREYMBORG (1883–1966)
Editor and publisher
Advertisement for *Others* magazine, ca. 1915–19
Private collection.



15) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Love Songs”
Others magazine, July 1915
Private collection
URL: <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr523168/#%20>

Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable | Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Gallery Labels

In 1915, Loy wrote to Van Vechten of her *Love Songs*, suggesting he offer the first four verses to New York-based poet and editor Alfred Kreymborg for *Others* magazine: “I am soon going to write the second batch—which will be finer—the whole will make a progression of realisations—crescendo & transcendo!” The first of the suite were published in July, and while Loy was confident that her lines were “the best since Sappho,” she and Kreymborg were overwhelmed by the outraged response they garnered, due to the unprecedentedly bold treatment of sexuality by a woman. A recording of Loy reading the first of these poems fifty years later, in 1965, can be found in the second gallery of this exhibition.

Arthur Cravan

Arthur Cravan (1888–unknown), born Fabian Avenarius Lloyd, was a poet, boxer, painter, magazine editor, and, most of all, a provocateur. Loy called him a “giant who carried the circus within him.” Like his uncle, Oscar Wilde, everything Cravan did was theatrically larger than life and calculated to disrupt. As a pugilist, he was physically imposing; he had gone six rounds with the heavyweight champion Jack Johnson. He had also incited intellectual duels through scabrous reviews in his “little magazine,” *Maintenant*. Perhaps his most notorious contribution to the American avant-garde consisted of a characteristically outrageous gesture: invited to lecture at the 1917 Independents Exhibition, he arrived drunk, disrobed, and shouted epithets until the police apprehended him. Shortly thereafter he absconded to Canada, then to Mexico, where Mina Loy joined him the following year. Though their life was penniless and peripatetic, they conceived a child. Cravan would not live to meet his daughter, as he disappeared in 1918, possibly trying to sail a hand-made boat to Argentina. When Cravan failed to arrive in Buenos Aires to meet her, a distraught Loy returned to London, where she gave birth to Jemima Fabienne Cravan Lloyd, named in honor of the baby’s deceased father.



Henri Hayden (1883–1970)
Arthur Cravan, 1912
oil on canvas
32 x 27 3/8 in. (81.28 x 69.53 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



Unknown Artist
Johnson vs. Cravan Fight Poster, 1916 (modern facsimile, printed later)
lithograph
19 x 45 in. (48 x 114.3 cm)
Collection Roger Conover

The Polish-born painter Henri Hayden is best known for his cubist compositions, but between 1912 and 1914 he executed a series of portraits of Paris personages in a less abstract style. While this study of the legendary Arthur Cravan suggests the poet-boxer’s imposing character, it also reveals a gentlemanly demeanor that Cravan did his best to hide behind liquor, boxing gloves, and unrepentant bravado.

Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable | Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
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1) ARTHUR CRAVAN (1887–Unknown)
publisher and editor
Maintenant, 1912 (reprint edition 1957)
Private Collection



2) ROBERT J. COADY (1876-1921)
Editor, *The Soil: A Magazine of Art* 1, no. 5 (July 1917)
Issue includes Arthur Cravan's "Oscar Wilde is Alive!"
Private Collection

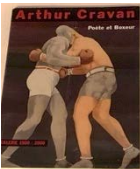
Published between 1916 and 1917, Robert Coady's *The Soil: A Magazine of Art*, addressed art and culture in the United States. Among its contributors (and subjects) was the poet and boxer Arthur Cravan. In this, the magazine's final issue, appears the conclusion of Cravan's short story: "Oscar Wilde is Alive!" describing a fictive encounter between Cravan and his famous uncle. Intriguingly, the narrative ends with Wilde vanishing into the streets of Paris, anticipating Cravan's own disappearance in 1918.



3) MARIA LLUÏSA BORRÀS (1931–2010)
Arthur Cravan
Sirmio: Quaderns Crema, 1993
Private Collection



4) ARTHUR CRAVAN (1887–Unknown)
Oeuvres: Poèmes, Articles, Lettres
Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1987
Private Collection



5) GALERIE 1900–2000
Arthur Cravan: Poète et Boxeur
exhibition catalogue
Private Collection



6) UNKNOWN ARTIST
Arthur Cravan in the ring, ca. 1916
gelatin silver print
facsimile
Collection of Roger Conover

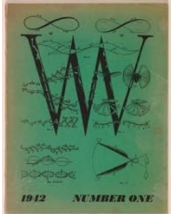


7) UNKNOWN ARTIST
Jack Johnson and Arthur Cravan at Pre-Fight Dinner Party, Barcelona, 1916
publicity photograph
Collection of Roger Conover

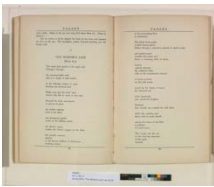
Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable | Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Gallery Labels



8) UNKNOWN ARTIST
Arthur Cravan in the ring with Jack Johnson, 1916 (facsimile)
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover



9) ARTHUR CRAVAN (1887–Unknown)
Arthur Cravan: Notes, 1942 (facsimile)
published in *VVV*, No. 1 (June 1942)
Collection of Roger Conover



10) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Widow's Jazz, 1931 (facsimile)
published in *Pagany: A Native Quarterly* 2:2 (Spring 1931), edited by Richard Johns
Private Collection



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Colossus, n.d. (facsimile)
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University
URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16598955>

While it is not evident that Cravan's influence came to bear greatly on Loy's art in the years to follow, both he and the longing his absence inspired were recurring motifs in her writing. She drafted numerous versions of a narrative account of Cravan's life entitled *Colossus*, which remains unpublished. His presence also haunts poems such as *The Widow's Jazz*.



12) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“International Psycho-Democracy”
Little Review 8:1 (Autumn 1921)
Private collection
URL: <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr516934/>

After sailing from Salina Cruz, Mexico to Buenos Aires, where she anticipated seeing Cravan (who would fail to arrive), Loy began writing a manifesto, *International Psycho-Democracy*. Some scholars have interpreted the text as a memorial to her life with Cravan.

IV. TRANS-ATLANTIC PEREGRINATIONS

1919–1923

After the birth of her daughter Fabienne in London, Loy made her way back to Florence where she had left her two older children with a domestic nurse. Shortly thereafter, she returned to New York in search of Cravan, and to a changed world. The Arensbergs circle was no longer a focal point, but Loy reconnected with other friends, including Djuna Barnes, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. She also forged new connections and continued to publish her writing and to show her artwork.

In 1921, following a brief respite at the Rose Valley sanatorium in Pennsylvania, to address what she described to her publisher, Robert McAlmon, as her “very smashed up” health, Loy traveled back to Europe. Her return to Florence was hastened by another blow: the news that her former husband, Stephen Haweis, had assumed custody of their son Giles and whisked him away to the Caribbean. The youngster would die of cancer before his mother could see him again. From Florence, Loy would travel to Vienna and Berlin—where she lived for a short period—before relocating to Paris in 1923. Throughout these peregrinations, Loy remained an active participant in the international literary and artistic avant-garde.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Untitled (Portrait of Flossie [Florence] Williams), 1924
graphite

19 1/2 x 16 in. (49.53 x 40.64 cm)

Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Girl with Red Hair, ca. 1921
watercolor and graphite

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1982



MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Untitled (Portrait of Man Ray), ca. 1925
graphite

Collection Roger Conover

Man Ray and Mina Loy originally met at the home of Walter and Louise Arensberg, generous patrons of modern art around whom a circle of artists and poets congregated. Later, the American photographer would become her neighbor in Paris. As Loy’s inscription (“Never say I don’t love you”) suggests, they shared a warm friendship and deep regard for one another.



MAN RAY (1890–1976)

Portrait (Mina Loy), 1920
gelatin silver print

Collection Roger Conover

Man Ray took up photography in 1915—initially as a way of documenting his paintings—and one of his first female models was Mina Loy. In this portrait he jokes about her fondness for long pendant earrings, showing her with a thermometer dangling from her ear. The mercury reads zero, perhaps suggesting Loy’s cool cerebrality and detached manner.

Modernist Influences

By writing critically and poetically about the artists and art she admired, Loy honed her understanding and fluency in the literary and visual languages of modernism, and articulated her experience directly, without debt, deference, or reference. In an age of destruction and displacement, modernist forms provided her with a vehicle to express her aesthetic consciousness freely. As Loy put it: “The flux of life is pouring its aesthetic aspect into your eyes, your ears—and you ignore it because you are looking for your canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass case or tradition. Modernism says: Why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleurably realize all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up your sensory everyday life?” The photographic portraits by Carl Van Vechten and Lee Miller that hang to the right testify to the reciprocal influence that flowed between Loy and the creatives she admired. In the neighboring gallery, exhibition visitors can hear Loy reading her poem, “Joyce’s Ulysses” included in this case.



CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI (1876–1957)

Golden Bird, ca. 1920

gelatin silver print (facsimile)

Reproduced in C. Brancusi, by Vasile Georgescu Paleolog (Bucharest: Editions Forum, 1947)

Private collection

While passing through Paris in 1921, Loy saw Constantin Brancusi’s *Golden Bird* (1919–20) sculpture in the collection of Mariette Mills. The radical modernism it represented inspired Loy to write a poem *Brancusi’s Golden Bird*. Through writing the poem she took in hand Brancusi’s exquisite exemplar of the power of distillation and made modernism her own. Scofield Thayer reproduced Loy’s poem in *The Dial* facing Brancusi’s transcendent photograph of his sculpture. In gratitude for the poem, and as a testament to their friendship, Brancusi gave Loy a copy of the photograph. The poem and photograph were subsequently reproduced in the 1926 Brummer Brancusi exhibition catalogue and in the Romanian critic Vasile Georgescu Paleolog’s *C. Brancusi* in 1947, as indicated by the materials included in the accompanying case.



LEE MILLER (1907–1977)

Mina Loy, ca. 1930

gelatin silver print

Collection Roger Conover



CARL VAN VECHTEN (1880–1964)

Mina Loy, 1937

gelatin silver print

Collection Roger Conover

Case 5



1–2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Gertrude Stein,” 1924 (facsimile)
published in *The Transatlantic Review*, November 1924, edited by Ford Madox Ford
Private Collection



3) GERTRUDE STEIN (1874–1946)
What are Masterpieces
Los Angeles, Calif., The Conference press [ca. 1940] book; 95 p. illus. 24 cm
George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College

Gertrude Stein’s creative autonomy, uncompromising voice, and non-traditional lesbian household modelled for Loy the life of an independent woman artist. Loy became Stein’s advocate, bringing her unpublished work to New York in 1920 to read at Société Anonyme, Inc., the artists’ museum formed by Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray. Loy drew Stein’s portrait (now lost), which the sitter was rumored to have signed in approval. Loy also wrote a critical analysis of Stein’s work in 1929. The essay was run as a two-part letter to Ford Madox Ford in the *Transatlantic Review*. In these texts, Loy identified Modernism as an energetic force that reached across disciplines through visionaries including Paul Cézanne, Constantin Brancusi, and Stein.



4) FORD MADDOX FORD (1873–1939), author
WYNDHAM LEWIS (1882–1957), designer
Antwerp, 1915
London: Poetry Bookshop, [1915?] book; [7] pages ; 22 cm

George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College

Ford Maddox Ford’s *Antwerp*, released in a booklet designed by Wyndham Lewis, addresses the impact of the global conflict that would come to be known as World War I. Written early in the course of the military campaigns, this modernist poem celebrates the audacious courage and conviction of the Belgians who resisted—despite being overpowered—the German advance toward France rather than acquiescing to its military might. Both the poem and the style of Lewis’s illustration reflect the principles of Vorticism, established by Lewis, a movement influenced by Futurism, but distancing itself from an uncritical celebration of technology and seeking to draw the spectator into its vortex. Loy applauded Lewis’s critique of Marinetti’s Futurist vision.



5) WYNDHAM LEWIS (1882–1957)
The Starry Sky, ca. 1917
Little Review, November 1917
Bowdoin College Museum of Art



6) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“‘The Starry Sky’ of WYNDHAM LEWIS,” ca. 1917
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923 (see case 7)
From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover.
New York, 1996 (see case 11) (facsimile)

Mina Loy wrote “‘The Starry Sky’ of WYNDHAM LEWIS” in response to a reproduction of the artist’s painting in the November 1917 issue of *The Little Review*. Loy met Lewis while a student at Académie Colarossi. She was reacquainted with his work when she visited London in 1912 and saw the so-called *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition* curated by Robert Fry at the Grafton Galleries. Although featuring works by English artists such as Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Stanley Spencer alongside Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, the only artist Loy specifically expressed an interest was Lewis. In a letter to Mabel Dodge (later Mabel Dodge Luhan) she described Lewis as “a marvelous draftsman of the Picasso school—in method—but himself alone in vision.” Embracing, like Loy, a vision of the heavenly constellations as an apt metaphor for artistic aspiration, Lewis came to serve as a role model for Loy in his ability as a visual artist to amplify his visibility by utilizing his voice as a publisher, writer, playwright, and critic.



7) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Portrait of James Joyce, 1922
Vanity Affair, April 1922 (facsimiles)
Private Collection

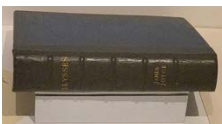


In the summer of 1921, Loy met James Joyce in Paris and drew his portrait. It appeared alongside a profile of Joyce by Loy’s friend Djuna Barnes in the April 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*.



8) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Joyce’s Ulysses, ca. 1921–22 (facsimile)
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923 (see Case 7)
From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover.
New York, 1996 (see Case 11)

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Gallery Labels



9) JAMES JOYCE (1882–1941)

Ulysses, 1922

London: Published for the Egoist Press, London by John Rodker, Paris, 1922
book; 2 unnumbered, 732, 4 unnumbered pages ; 23 cm. (8 vo).

George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College



10) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Portrait of Freud, 1924 (facsimile; original lost)

Drawing

In the spring of 1922, while in Vienna, poet, publisher, and art collector Scofield Thayer introduced Loy to Sigmund Freud. They shared an evening at the theater, after which Loy drew Freud's portrait. Loy maintained a deep skepticism about Freud and D. H. Lawrence, men whom she believed only evaluated women from a distance, superficially assessing their dissatisfactions in their psychological treatises and writings.



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Untitled (Portrait of Jules Pascin), ca. 1923 (facsimile; original lost)

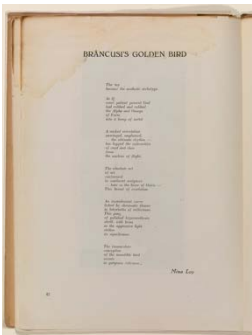
drawing

12) MINA LOY (1882–1966)



Untitled (Portrait of Constantin Brancusi) ca. 1924 (facsimile; original lost)

Drawing



13) Mina Loy, “Brancusi’s *Golden Bird*,” 1922

First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923 (see Case 7)

Reproduced in *C. Brancusi*, by the Romanian critic Vasile Georgescu
Paleolog,

Editions Forum, Bucharest, 1947 (facsimile)

Collection of Roger Conover



14) Constantin Brancusi, *Golden Bird*, ca. 1920, photographed by the artist

Reproduced in *Brancusi*, The Brummer Gallery, New York, November 15–December
17, 1926

Collection of Roger Conover



15) SCOFIELD THAYER (1889–1982)

The Dial 73, no. 5 (November 1922)

Including Mina Loy, “Brancusi’s Golden Bird” and Constantin Brancusi, *The Golden Bird*

Private Collection

URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031076568&view=1up&seq=596&q1=GOLDEN%20BIRD>



16) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Poe, ca. 1921–22

First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923 (see Case 7)

From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover. New York, 1996 (see Case 11) (facsimile)

URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031076543&view=1up&seq=662&q1=POE>



17) EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809–1849), author

GUSTAVE DORÉ (1832–1883), illustrator

The Raven, 1884

New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884 23 p., [24] leaves of plates: ill.; 47 cm.

George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College

Loy wrote *Poe* as she tried to come to terms with Arthur Cravan’s inexplicable disappearance. In *Poe*, Loy’s soul-chilling longing for Cravan functions as an avatar for the greater losses of the age felt after WWI:

a lyric elixir of death
embalms
the spindle spirits of your hour glass love
on moon spun nights

Case 6

1) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Auto-Facial-Construction, 1919



Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/12344751>

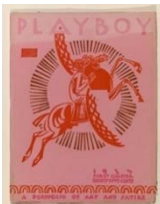
Loy considered herself an expert in the close study of physiognomic phenomena. This resulted in her creation of what she hoped would be a marketable invention, which she called *Auto Facial Construction*. Loy’s proposal for self-induced physiognomic reconstruction first appeared in Florence in 1919 as an advertising prospectus: “Years of specialized interest in physiognomy as an artist, have brought me to an understanding of the human face, which has made it possible for me to find the basic principle of facial integrity, its conservation, and when necessary, reconstruction.” Although not commercially successful, the gambit testified to Loy’s attentiveness to appearance—and her related penchant for portraiture—as well as her interest in connecting modern art with new inventions to enhance modern living.

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Gallery Labels



2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Three Studies”
Art Review, October 1921 (facsimile)
Collection of Roger Conover

Inspired by the artist’s daughter, Joella, these “studies” were exhibited at the Belmanson Gallery in Wanamaker’s department store in 1921 together with her drawing of gypsies (no. 12 in this case).



3) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Preceptors of Childhood” (facsimile)
in *Playboy: A Portfolio of Art and Satire* 2:1 (Fall 1923)
Private collection



4) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Three Graces
Playboy 1:7 (May 1921)
Collection of Roger Conover



5) NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE
“Would You Be Different? Madame Loy Shows How,” *Pittsburgh Press*, April 3, 1921 (facsimile)

6) DJUNA BARNES (1892–1982)
Born Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, United States
Caricatures of Mina Loy, Marsden Hartley, and Gertrude Stein, November 4, 1923
New York Tribune, November 4, 1923 (facsimile)



7) NATALIE BARNEY (1876–1972)
Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy, Nice, France, ca. 1925
gelatin silver print (facsimile)
Collection of Roger Conover



8) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Apology of Genius,” 1922 (facsimile)
The Dial, July 1922
Collection of Roger Conover
URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031076568&view=1up&seq=107&q1=apology%20of%20genius>

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9) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
O Hell and Summer Night in a Florence Slum, 1920
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883–1963), editor
ROBERT M. MCALMON (1895–1956), editor
Contact, No. 1, December 1920 [reprint]

Edited by William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) and Robert M. McAlmon (1895–1956)
Private Collection



10) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Drawing featuring gypsies with young girl
Art Review, October 1921
Private collection

Together with studies inspired by the artist's daughter, Joella (see no. 2 in this case), this piece was exhibited at the Belmaison Gallery in Wanamaker's department store in 1921.



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Fille en robe rouge, 1913 (facsimile)
Girl with Red Hair, ca. 1921 (facsimile)
Dial Magazine April 1, 1921
Collection of Roger Conover

URL:

https://books.google.com/books?id=Is1PAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=april&f=false

**V. GALERIES MINA LOY, PARIS
1923–1930**

Following her return to Europe in 1921, which took her first to Florence and then to Vienna and Berlin, Loy settled in Paris in 1923. There she became an integral member of “the avant-garde of the avant-garde,” which included Constantin Brancusi, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Jules Pascin, and Man Ray. In 1923, her first collection of poetry, *Lunar Baedeker* (sic) was published by Robert McAlmon's expatriate Contact Press, alongside first books of poems by Ernest Hemingway and Marsden Hartley. Simultaneously, Loy continued painting, designing, and inventing. Peggy Guggenheim, the celebrated patron, bohemian, and socialite, became enamored of Loy's decorative collages of paper flowers and, in 1925, successfully marketed her “Jaded Blossoms” in exhibitions at Macy's department store and Namm Gallery in Brooklyn. Shortly thereafter, Guggenheim and Loy opened the Galeries Mina Loy in Paris, featuring Loy's lampshade designs and lighting devices. These works, often constructed from and inspired by materials she scavenged from Paris's flea markets, brought Loy international recognition as a designer and were widely reviewed in decorative arts magazines. Concerned about her designs being appropriated by others, she began to patent her designs and ran the business until 1930. As her friend Sylvia Beach, proprietor of Shakespeare & Company Bookstore, would later recall: “When you went to

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Mina's apartment you threaded your way past lamp shades that were everywhere: she made them to support her children. She made all her own clothes. She wrote poetry whenever she had time."



MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Ship Lamp, ca. 1925

Advertisement, *Art et Industrie*, October 1928 (facsimile)

Private Collection

This advertisement for the famous lamps and lampshades designed by Mina Loy and sold at the Galeries Mina Loy in Paris promises “fairy-like shadows” produced by “lamps made from historic glass with contemporary lampshades.” Loy sourced the material for her lamps from bottles gathered through trips to the flea markets of Paris, as reflected in Julien Levy’s film of the artist, installed nearby. Peggy Guggenheim described Loy’s inventiveness in her autobiography, writing: “About this time [1925–26] Mina Loy and I embarked on a great business venture. With her usual genius she had invented three new forms of lampshade [visible here and in the adjacent case]. One was a globe of the world with a light inside it. One was a shade with boats whose sails were in relief. They were fixed on separately and gave the illusion of old schooners sailing in the wind. Her third invention was a double-cellophane shade with paper cut-outs in between, which cast beautiful shadows.”

Case 7



1) UNIDENTIFIED AUTHOR

“Les Abat-Jour de Mina Loy” (facsimile)

Art et Industrie, January 1927

Collection of Roger Conover



2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Design for Airplane Lampshade, December 9, 1941 (facsimile)

ink on paper

Mina Loy Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11866211>



3) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Lamp Design, ca. 1927

ink on paper

Collection of Roger Conover



4) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Mappes Mondes, 1927

photograph

Collection of Roger Conover

This lamp, representing the “world globe,” designed, patented, and manufactured by Mina Loy in Paris in 1927, was lit up from the inside.



5) JOELLA HAWEIS BAYER (1907–2004)
Photograph of Mina Loy, *Tulip Lamp*, 1927
gelatin silver print
Collection of Roger Conover

An inscription included on the verso of this photograph by Loy’s daughter, Joella, indicates that the tulips lit up and were fabricated from “Rhodoide” plastic in Paris in 1927.



6) UNIDENTIFIED AUTHOR
“Miniature Flower Pictures are on Display at Namm’s”
Women’s Wear, May 19, 1925 (facsimile)
Collection of Roger Conover

Peggy Guggenheim secured exhibitions for Loy’s work in the windows of Macy’s and at Namm Gallery in Brooklyn. All the *Jaded Blossoms*, lamps, and lampshades were sold. A review in *Women’s Wear* cited the Namm show as “an original little collection of art works to be classed as pictures, though they are not paintings.” Loy’s *Jaded Blossoms* on exhibit at Cargoes Gallery were also reviewed favorably in *The American*, *The New York Times*, and *The Little Review*.



7) WILLIAM B. M’CORMICK (1868–unknown)
“Review of *Jaded Flowers* Exhibition at Cargoes Gallery,” *New York Sun*, 1925 (facsimile)
Private collection.



8) UNIDENTIFIED AUTHOR
“Novel Floral Decorations That Light Up Modern Interiors,” *The Daily Telegraph*, October 11, 1929 (facsimile)
Private collection



9) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Bird Lamp and Flower Lampshade, November 1945 (facsimile)
ink on paper
Collection of Roger Conover



10) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Well-Known American Society Girl and British Artist Open Lamp Shop in Paris, ca. 1926 (facsimile)
gelatin silver print
Private collection.

Depicting Mina Loy and Peggy Guggenheim at the Galeries Mina Loy at 52 Rue du Colisée, ca. 1926, this press photograph bore the following caption: “Peggy Guggenheim (standing), well-Known American Society Girl, who recently joined the ranks of young American business women in Paris, and British Artist Open Lamp Shop in Paris, opened a lamp shop with the famous British artist Mina Loy (seated) in the heart of the French capital.”

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11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled (Figure for Lampshade Fashion Design), ca. 1926–1930
watercolor and gouache on paper
From the collection of J. and J. Gordon.

This depiction of an elegantly dressed woman represents the only element of a Mina Loy lampshade known to survive. A similar figure appears in the background of the lamp pictured with Mina Loy and Peggy Guggenheim.



12) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Mina Loy's Paris business card, 1926 (facsimile)
Private collection.



13) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Galeries Mina Loy stationery, 1926
Private collection



14) UNIDENTIFIED DESIGNER
Laurence Vail exhibition brochure, Galeries Mina Loy, Paris, 1926
Collection of Roger Conover

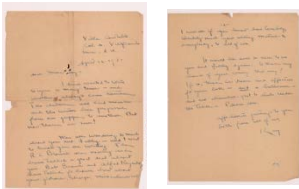
This brochure advertises an exhibition of paintings by Laurence Vail at the Galeries Mina Loy. Vail was the husband of Mina Loy's business partner, Peggy Guggenheim.



15) PEGGY GUGGENHEIM (1898–1979)
Letter to Roger Conover, March 17, 1979
Private Collection



16) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy's fresco at Peggy Guggenheim's Villa in Provence, France, 1925
photograph
Private collection



17) KAY BOYLE (1902–1992)
Letter to Mina Loy
Private Collection

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Gallery Labels



18) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Joella, Fabienne, and Mina Loy at Paris Carnival, ca. 1926.
gelatin silver print
Private Collection.



19) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled (Sleeping Figure), ca. 1929.
pencil
Collection of J. & J. Gordon



20) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Mina Loy and Joella (sitting on the bed), Paris, 1929
gelatin silver print
Private Collection



21) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Apology of Genius II, October 28, 1930 (facsimile)
graphite
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

A final manuscript of this sequel to one of Loy's best known poems has never been located, but this draft reflects her fascination with aerial and cosmic imagery, as developed in both her poetry and visual art. It was written on the reverse of stationary from the *Galleries Mina Loy*.



22) ALFRED KREYMBORG (1883–1966)
Contact Press advertisement, featuring Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedecker* (sic), 1923
Private collection



23) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Lunar Baedecker, 1923
Contact Press, New York
Collection of Roger Conover



24) ALFRED KREYMBORG (1883–1966)
Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers, ca. 1925
Contact Press, New York
Private collection.



25) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER
Jane Heap, Mina Loy, and Ezra Pound in Paris, 1923 (facsimile)
gelatin silver print
Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



26) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Mina Loy and Two Unidentified Women with Brancusi and His Dog Polaire, in Front of a Painted Canvas at the Throne Fair, ca. 1922–23 (facsimile)

gelatin silver print (facsimile)

Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, inv. PH 1212 A.



27) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Brancusi's studio, Paris: Constantin Brancusi, Tristan Tzara, unidentified woman, Mina Loy, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson, ca. 1925 (facsimile)

gelatin silver print

Private Collection



28) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Mina Loy in Paris, ca. 1927

gelatin silver print

Private Collection



29) UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Group Portrait of American and European Artists in Paris (Back row, left to right: Bill Bird, unknown, Holger Cahill, Lee Miller, Les Copeland, Hilaire Hiler, Curtis Moffat.

Middle row: Kiki de Montparnasse, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, unknown, Ezra Pound. Front row: Man Ray, Mina Loy, Tristan Tzara, Jean Cocteau), 1923

(facsimile)

gelatin silver print

Private collection



30) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Modern Poetry, 1925, published in *Charm*, Vol. 3, no. 3, April 1925 (facsimile)

Harriet Monroe, the influential but conservative editor of *Poetry Magazine*, had previously found little merit in Loy's writing. Upon her visit to Paris in 1926 however, she changed her mind, identifying Loy as an essential force: "Perhaps a great deal of this gayety [sic] and color aforesaid was due to the presence of Mina Loy. I may never have fallen very hard for this lady's poetry, but her personality is quite irresistible ... [Her] charm, which will survive a century if she lives that long, [is] sustained by a gayety [sic] that seems the worldly-wise conquest of many despairs—all expressed in a voice which ... is rich with all the sorrows of the world. Yes, poetry is in this lady whether she writes it or not."

VI. AGENT FOR JULIEN LEVY GALLERY PARIS 1930–1936

The commercial and domestic harmony that accompanied Loy's success with Galeries Mina Loy was short-lived. In 1927, Julien Levy, a precocious Harvard graduate and acquaintance of Marcel Duchamp and Robert McAlmon, appeared in Paris and fell in love with Mina Loy's elder daughter, Joella. The couple married within the year and departed for New York, where Levy opened the famous Julien Levy

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Gallery. Following Joella's departure from Paris, Mina Loy and Djuna Barnes became close friends. Together they frequented Gertrude Stein's salon and Natalie Barney's Académie des Femmes (School of Women), where Loy first delivered her lecture on Gertrude Stein. Loy closed her lamp shop in 1930, and for the next six years worked as the European agent for Levy's New York gallery. In this role, she was largely responsible (but remains uncredited) for introducing Levy to the artists who would make up the first exhibition of Surrealism in America, including Eugene and Leonid Berman, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, Arshile Gorky, René Magritte, Pavel Tchelitchew, and Umbo, whose work hangs nearby.

The admiration and indebtedness that Levy's artists came to feel for Loy is reflected in the numerous portraits of her created by such artists as Lee Miller, George Platt Lynes, Man Ray, and Joseph Cornell, as reflected in this exhibition.



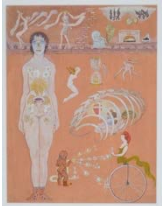
LEE MILLER (1907–1977)
Mina Loy, ca. 1930
gelatin silver print
6 7/8 x 9 1/8 in. (17.46 x 23.18 cm).

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001



GEORGE PLATT LYNES (1907–1955)
Mina Loy, 1930–1934
gelatin silver print
9 9/16 x 7 11/16 in. (24.29 x 19.53 cm).

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled (Surreal Scene), ca. 1935
gouache with collage on panel
20 3/4 x 16 3/4 in. (52.71 x 42.55 cm)
Collection Roger Conover

In this enigmatic and provocative work, Loy seems to reflect upon love, loss, and resilience. With iconography that would anticipate her later work *Househunting*, the body of the central female figure—perhaps an allusion to the artist herself—displays multiple symbols connected with regeneration. These include the wheat sheaves of the Greek goddess Persephone, lotus blossoms, and a chalice of communal wine promising the blood of the risen Christ. A devout Christian scientist, the artist includes what appear to be other references to rebirth, such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the bones of a whale, alluding to the Biblical tale of Jonah. Enclosed within its protective ribs are a man and a woman, bringing to mind Loy and her lost love, Arthur Cravan, widely believed to have perished at sea.

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UMBO (Otto Umber) (1902–1980)

Uncanny Street I (Unheimliche Strasse I), 1928

vintage gelatin silver print

image and sheet: 11 5/16 x 9 inches (28.8 x 22.9 cm).

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001

Among the artists Loy brought to Julien Levy's attention was German photographer Umbo (Otto Umbehrr), who the gallerist would exhibit in 1928. This work's title, *Uncanny Street I (Unheimliche Strasse I)*, refers to the discomfort, and even horror, provoked as one becomes estranged from something familiar—an all-too-common experience for many as Europe grappled with the rise of Fascism in the years leading up to World War II. The abstract imagery renders visible the experience of destabilization Umbo wished to convey. Loy would similarly apply the language and strategies of Surrealism in her visual art to express her own sense of alienation from the people and places she had once held dear.



JULIEN LEVY (1906–1981)

Mina Loy at the Marché aux Puces, Paris, 1932

film (digitized), 2:00

Private Collection

This film footage from 1932 reflects Mina Loy's joy in the flea markets she frequented to find antique bottles and other materials to construct and enhance her famous lamps and shades. Her son-in-law, the art dealer Julien Levy, enjoyed joining Loy on these expeditions, and here Levy documents Loy with her daughter—and Levy's sister-in-law—Fabienne. Loy's embrace of found materials early in her career continued to be a mainstay of her developing artistic practice.

Paintings by Mina Loy, 1933
Julien Levy Gallery

Since their first acquaintance, Julien Levy implored Loy, his talented mother-in-law, to produce an exhibition of new paintings. Loy finally agreed to *Paintings by Mina Loy*, in February of 1933, her first solo show in the United States. In preparation, Levy took work by Loy back to New York and secured her inclusion in Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin Jr.'s *Exhibition of Literature and Poetry in Painting since 1850* at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut.

These remarkable paintings introduce an ensemble of heavenly hosts framed against the backdrop of the troposphere, the layer of atmosphere closest to earth. The figures are without bodies, merely heads, hands, and arms freed from the corporeality Loy found so problematic. She created a new type of painting technique using a mixture of sand, gesso, and plaster, a "fresco vero" that created a luminosity essential to her conception of the series. The subjects of the paintings in the 1933 exhibition—stars, moons, dawn—were all contiguous with Loy's work as a designer of illumination devices in the previous decade.

Loy designed the announcement for the exhibition, included in case 8 in this gallery.

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MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Drift of Chaos II (Hermes), 1933
oil on panel
36 x 47 in. (91.44 x 119.38 cm),
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Drift of Chaos III (Venus), 1933
oil on canvas
15 x 31 in. (38.1 x 78.74 cm)

Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Drift of Chaos VI (Butterfly Woman), 1933
oil on board
20 x 33 1/4 in. (50.8 x 84.46 cm).

Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Light, 1932
mixed media on board
25 x 19 1/4 in. (63.5 x 48.9 cm).
Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Teasing a Butterfly, 1932
mixed media on board
33 x 45 in. (83.82 x 114.3 cm).

Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Moons I, 1932
mixed media on board
26 1/4 x 35 1/4 in. (66.68 x 89.54 cm)

Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Dawn (L'Aube), 1932
mixed media on board
25 1/2 x 34 1/2 in. (64.77 x 87.63 cm)

Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Stars, 1932
mixed media on board
31 x 34 in. (78.74 x 86.36 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Bewitched, 1932
mixed media on board
27 1/2 x 35 in. (69.85 x 88.9 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled (verso of Levy Exhibition Announcement, 1933), ca. 1933
pencil on paper
21 x 16 3/4 in. (53.34 x 42.55 cm).
Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Woman Weaver, 1930
graphite, charcoal, colored pencil and wash on paper
29 x 22 in. (73.66 x 55.88 cm).
Private Collection

Joseph Cornell and Mina Loy

A close friendship between Mina Loy and Joseph Cornell began in the 1930s, after Cornell saw *Paintings by Mina Loy* at the Julien Levy Gallery. The 1933 show was utterly transformational for him as he attests in his November 1946 “Roman Baedeker” letter to Loy, in the case below. As a way of expressing his admiration for Loy, Cornell inserted her photographic portrait by Man Ray (at right) behind blue-tinted glass, covered by shards of broken mirror, which reveal and fragment Loy’s image. The stunning work, “*Imperious Jewelry of the Universe*” (*Lunar Baedeker*): *Portrait of Mina Loy, Daguerreotype-Object*—is included in the case below. Its title derives from a line in Loy’s 1922 poem, “Apology of Genius,” reproduced in the invitation to Julien Levy’s exhibition of her work, seen in the case below.



MAN RAY (1890–1976)
Portrait of Mina Loy, ca. 1920
gelatin silver print
Collection Roger Conover



JOSEPH CORNELL (1903–1972)
Untitled (Woodpecker Habitat), 1946
wood, cut paper, and found objects
Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. Partial gift of Mrs. Edwin A. Bergman, and purchased with the gift (by exchange) of Anna Warren Ingersoll, 2000

The influence of Loy’s 1933 exhibition was ongoing for Cornell, known for his poignant assemblages using found materials. In his “Roma Baedeker” letter of November 21, 1946 to Loy—included in the adjacent case—Cornell wrote that a reflection on the side of a passing truck recalled the “indelible impression of your sky-blue paintings.” Intriguingly, Cornell’s *Untitled (Woodpecker Habitat)*, created the same year he shared these sentiments with Loy, incorporates liberal amounts of a celestial blue. It

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appears in the central circular “target,” along the left and right interior edges, on the outlines of the birds’ bodies and dripping down upon a small stamp at lower left. Indeed, the pervasive if subtle use of blue in this composition suggests that a memory of Loy’s work was operating in Cornell’s mind. A sky blue page frames an undated letter to Loy from Cornell in which he rejoices over a critic’s praise for his work and thanks his friend for her warm and comforting thoughts.

Case 8

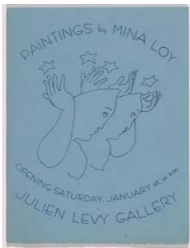


JOSEPH CORNELL (1903–1972)
Letter to Mina Loy, August 1, 1943
ink and collage on paper
Private Collection



JOSEPH CORNELL (1903–1972)
“Imperious Jewelry of the Universe” (Lunar Baedeker): Portrait of Mina Loy, Daguerreotype-Object, 1938
assemblage silvered glass, glass shards, cut-out printed illustration, and gelatin silver print in artist’s frame
Case: 5 3/16 x 4 3/16 x 1 inches (13.2 x 10.6 x 2.5 cm), Frame: 11 x 10 1/16 x 2 1/8 inches (27.9 x 25.6 x 5.4 cm).

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Levy Exhibition Announcement, 1933
(center fold and back of invitation are facsimiles)
Private Collection



JOSEPH CORNELL (1903–1972)
“Roma Baedeker”
Joseph Cornell, letter to Mina Loy, November 21, 1946

Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled (The Drifting Tower), ca. 1950
cut-paper and mixed-media collage on canvas
28 3/4 x 39 in. (73.03 x 99.06 cm).

Collection Roger Conover

Cornell's work, with its characteristic assemblage of materials retrieved from the "flotsam and jetsam" of life, may in turn have inspired Loy's *Untitled (The Drifting Tower)*, created around 1950. The floating figure appears to be tethered to a tower that pierces the sky through a bright opening in banks of gray clouds. Does this structure represent a proverbial "castle in the air" that pulls the artist and poet away from earthly concerns? Or does the cord suggest the persistence of mundane concerns that constrain the flight of imagination? The topsy-turvy world Loy constructs in this composition resonates with Cornell's letter to her, composed on sky-blue paper, that required its reader to rotate it mid-way through.

VII. NEW YORK 1936–1953

In 1936, Loy returned to New York from Paris. Living first in mid-town Manhattan, she moved downtown in 1941 to the Bowery, where she committed herself to reexamining the nature of life and art. While she continued to develop inventions to make daily life easier—such as knitting needles with measurements—or more beautiful—such as in the development of materials to produce shimmering patterns, she also faced the harsh reality represented by her homeless and indigent neighbors in the rough precinct of Manhattan's Lower East side that she now inhabited. She came to prefer the company of those who lived in the streets and alleys to that of the art and literary crowd with which she had become disillusioned. The homeless inhabitants of the streets with whom she consorted became the subjects of poems, drawings, and haunting assemblages created from the detritus of the Bowery. In 1959, Marcel Duchamp helped to organize a show of these works at the Bodley Gallery in Manhattan. She did not attend the opening, having by then moved to Aspen, Colorado, but many of her old friends did—Joseph Cornell, Djuna Barnes, William Copley, Marcel Duchamp, Frances Steloff, and Robert Coates (who reviewed the exhibition for *The New Yorker*) among them.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
9 *Untitled Drawings*, 1936–1953
graphite on paper
Each: 10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (27.31 x 20.96 cm)

Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

These pencil sketches reflect Loy's keen attention to the men and women who were her neighbors in the Bowery. This rare suite of drawings provides remarkable insight into her drawing process. Loy's quick record of her observations and her interest in the street life around her all fed into the expressive postures and visages of her late constructions.

Case 9



1) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Design for Dress Material, with Victory "V", 1941

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Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11863187>



2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Design, possibly for Fabric, ca. 1941

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11863187>



3) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Chatoyant Invention, ca. 1945 –4pp (facsimile)

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11866211>



4) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Window Washer Invention, June 29, 1946 (facsimile)

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11866211>



5) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Window Washer Invention, July 3, 1946 (facsimile)

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11866211>



6) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Study for Monument to Basketball, ca. 1945 (facsimile)

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11863187>



7) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Proposed slogan for Helena Rubenstein Perfume, July 15, 1940

Private Collection



8) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Fashion sketches, September 19, 1941 (facsimile)

colored pencil

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11863187>

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9) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Alphabet Games, 1940
Magnetic Letters (left)
Build Your Own Alphabet (right, 5 pp) (facsimiles)
ink on paper

Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11863187>



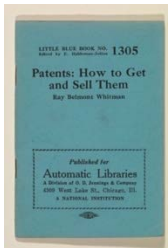
10) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Documentation of Alphabet Toy, ca. 1940
manuscript
Collection of Roger Conover



11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Knitting Needles with Measurements, September 28, 1946
ink on paper
Collection of Roger Conover



12) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Design for Airplane Curtain, ca. 1945
ink on paper
Collection of Roger Conover



13) RAY BELMONT WHITMAN
Patents: How to Get and Sell Them
Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Company, 1928
Private Collection

This small booklet, designed to clarify the process of registering and benefiting from U.S. patents, was owned by Mina Loy.



14) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Trademark application letter to unknown recipient, August 6, 1940
Collection of Roger Conover



15) ACCENT MAGAZINE
Winter 1947
Including Mina Loy, "Hilarious Israel"
Private Collection

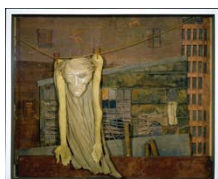


16) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
“Towards the Unknown,” Interview with Mina Loy
View 1 (February–March 1942)
Private Collection

Mina Loy: Constructions
Bodley Gallery, 1959

In 1953 Loy’s daughters, concerned for her well-being, persuaded their mother to move west to Aspen, Colorado, under the guise of a visit. Both Fabienne and Joella had settled there with their architect-husbands (respectively), Frederic Benedict and Herbert Bayer, who were involved with the transformation of the mountain community from a mining town to a ski resort. Thus Mina Loy unwittingly embarked upon her final exile, leaving her studio in the care of her devoted neighbor Stephen Ferris.

In 1959 Duchamp and Julien Levy secured an exhibition for Loy at the prominent Bodley Gallery. Under David Mann’s direction in its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, the gallery had exhibited artists such as Max Ernst, Roberto Matta, and Andy Warhol. Stuart Preston of the *New York Times* wrote that Loy’s assemblages were a formidable opponent not only of mainstream art but also of the larger politics of art at the time. Loy could not attend the opening of her exhibition, but many of her old friends did, including Djuna Barnes, Joseph Cornell, Kay Boyle, Robert Coates, Berenice Abbott, and Frances Steloff. Loy’s hard work and innovation were recognized, and she was awarded the Copley Foundation Award for Outstanding Achievement in Art, and a number of works exhibited here were first shown and sold at the Bodley Gallery, including *Communal Cot* and *Christ on a Clothesline*. The appreciation she felt for Duchamp’s efforts is reflected in her inscription for him of her *Lunar Baedeker & Timetables* (1958), displayed in the adjacent case.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Christ on a Clothesline, ca. 1949
cut-paper and mixed-media collage
24 x 41 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. (60.96 x 105.41 x 11.43 cm).
Collection Roger Conover

Loy’s *Christ on Clothesline* boldly addresses one of the West’s most powerful symbols of suffering and transcendence. Behind the titular figure is a mottled cityscape. Accentuating the powerfully ironic transformation of the Cross into a lowly domestic artifact—the simple string that many women erected on rooftops—Loy reminds her audience that the very myth of Christ foregrounds the presence of divinity among the most humble of circumstances. The care with which Loy crafted her work is reflected in related studies of Stephen Fry, a resident of the Bowery, who may have helped to inspire Loy’s depiction of Christ.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Communal Cot, 1949
cut-paper and mixed-media collage mounted on board
27 1/4 x 46 1/2 in. (69.2 x 118.1 cm)
Private Collection, Chicago

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Loy was capable of recognizing the poignancy of human resilience and the will to persist even in the most the most drab conditions and dire situations. Her collage *Communal Cot* renders visible imagery also developed in her narrative poem, “Hot Cross Bum.” Revisiting the same scene as the poem, Loy here brings images of poverty and homelessness into uncanny relief. Made of cardboard, paper, and rags, the ten wrapped bodies lie in various gestures, like so many sleeping *Pietas* or fallen pawns on a chessboard. Each of these tiny figures is given an identity through Loy’s attention to minute details of bodily gesture, facial expression, and the folds of the cloth. As the poet Ann Lauterbach has observed, here the real touches “the unbeautiful true” and transforms it into art.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Stephen Fry, ca. 1950
graphite on paper
17 x 12 1/2 in. (43.18 x 31.75 cm).

Private Collection

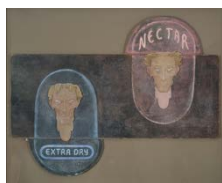


MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Stephen Fry, ca. 1950
graphite on paper
Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled, ca. 1950
cut-paper and mixed-media collage on board
23 1/4 x 27 in. (59.06 x 68.58 cm)
Private Collection

As the scholar Dawn Ades has observed, the two individuals wearing casual clothes in this work seem to exist within their day-to-day world while also engaging in some mysterious, wordless communion. The female figure brings to mind the artist herself, begging the question of who is represented by the male. Could it be Loy’s old friend Duchamp, her beloved Cravan, or perhaps yet another elusive presence?

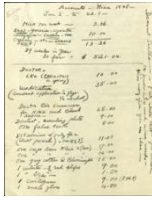


MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Nectar, ca. 1950
mixed media on board
35 3/4 x 44 in. (90.81 x 111.76 cm).
Collection Roger Conover

Loy’s *Nectar* makes provocative use of visual materials mined from an advertisement for a popular peach-flavored syrup used to make fizzy drinks. The combination of the phrases “Nectar” and “Extra Dry” with gaunt, menacing faces subverts the product’s intended message and brings to mind Marcel Duchamp’s provocative conceptual transformation of “readymade” materials through pieces such as *Fountain* (1917), in which a recontextualized urinal became a work of art. Loy’s work points forward to a series of objects further exploring the permutations of her complex interactions with her neighbors in the Bowery which garnered the admiration of Duchamp, Cornell, and other friends.

Case 10

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Gallery Labels



1) JEMIMA FABIENNE CRAVAN LLOYD BENEDICT (1919–1997)
Letter to Joella Bayer, January 1948 (facsimile)
Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller, Yale Collection of
American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library



2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Lunar Baedeker and Time-Tables (1958)
Inscribed to Marcel Duchamp, ca. 1958
Collection of Roger Conover



3) DENISE BROWNE HARE (1924–1997)
Marcel Duchamp Wearing “Sexy” Crown, Designed by Mina Loy, 1955 or 1959, ca. 1955.
Photograph (facsimile)
Marcel Duchamp Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.
Gift of Jacqueline, Paul, and Peter Matisse in memory of their mother Alexina Duchamp.



4) BERENICE ABBOTT (1898–1991)
Mina Loy’s No Parking, [ca. 1949], ca. 1959
photograph
Invitation for *Mina Loy: Constructions*, Bodley Gallery, April 14–25, 1959
Private Collection

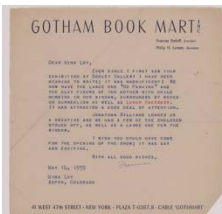
URL: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10993143>



5) UNIDENTIFIED AUTHOR
Review of Bodley exhibition, 1959 (facsimile)
Source unknown
Private collection



6) DAVID MANN (LIFE DATES UNKNOWN)
Letter to Mina Loy, May 26, 1959
Private Collection

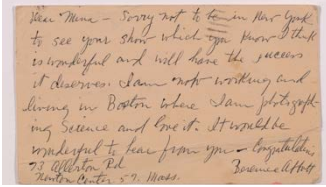


7) FRANCES STELOFF (1887–1989)
Letter to Mina Loy, May 14, 1959
Private Collection

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8) BERENICE ABBOTT (1898–1991)
Berenice Abbott Postcard to Mina Loy, 1959
Private Collection



9) ANITA VENTURA [MOZLEY] (1928–2010)
“In the Galleries: Mina Loy”
Arts Magazine 33, no. 7 (April 1959), p. 58
facsimile
Private collection



10) COLETTE ROBERTS (1910–1971)
“L’Univer surreal de Mina,” Review of Bodley Exhibition
France-Amérique: Le Journal Français des États-Unis, April 1959 (facsimile)
Private Collection



11) BARNET HODES (1900–1980)
Letter to Mina Loy on behalf of the William and Noma Copley Foundation, January 5, 1960
Private Collection



12) THOMAS MERTON (1915–1968)
Letter to Mina Loy, August 24, 1959
Collection of Roger Conover

**VIII ASPEN
1953–1966**

Loy created constructions in Aspen until her death in 1966, gathering materials from the town’s back alleys. While Loy never felt entirely at home in Aspen, her compositions, especially *Snow Crop*,

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Gallery Labels

Prospector I, and Prospector II, reflect a sense of irony and humor. Might her allusion to the city's white-peaked summits and the dreams of riches they inspired for miners parallel her own creative aspirations?

Loy once said art was a protest. As an artist she elected to inveigh against convention, patriarchy, obscurity, mediocrity, poverty, and, most of all, silence. To be an artist conferred the power and the means to have a voice that mattered. On a fragment of paper in her archive she once wrote, "We only excel in our moments of creation—the rest of the time we are unconscious—the material world is the cemetery of solids that have aggregated and dropped from the eternal motion of creation."

Her respect for the vision of the poet and artist is reflected in two late portraits of the artist—one by her friend the Black Mountain poet and publisher Jonathan Williams, —the other a self-portrait. Each distills Loy's likeness to her eyes alone. Perhaps not surprisingly, Loy elected to have herself represented through Williams's picture on the back cover of 1958 publication, *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables*.

In September of 1966, Mina Loy fell silent. In death she ascended into the sky to reside, as she had in life, a circumpolar star, ever-present, even when hidden from view.



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled, ca. 1955
metal mounted on cardboard
24 1/2 x 15 in. (62.23 x 38.1 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Snow Crop, ca. 1955
tin can lids mounted on board
25 x 19 3/16 x 3 in. (63.5 x 48.77 x 7.62 cm)
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Untitled, ca. 1955
mixed media
18 x 18 in. (45.72 x 45.72 cm)
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Prospector I, 1954
mixed media on paper mounted to panel
58 1/4 x 35 1/2 in. (147.96 x 90.17 cm).
Collection Roger Conover



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Prospector 2, 1954
mixed media on paper mounted to panel
58 1/4 x 35 1/2 in. (147.96 x 90.17 cm)
Collection Roger Conover

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias, 1965

From left to right, the recordings include:

- 1) Exhibiting Paintings in Paris as a Young Woman, 1:01
- 2) How Mina Loy Began Writing, 0:41
- 3) Reading her Poem “Love Song I,” (on view in Case 3), 1:10
- 4) Reading her Poem “Joyce’s Ulysses” (on view in Case 5), 2:36

Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

While in Aspen, Mina Loy forged a friendship with poet and publisher Jonathan Williams, who would publish her 1958 volume of poems, *Lunar Baedeker & Time Tables*. In 1965, while Williams was Poet-in-Residence at the Aspen Institute, he was visited by the younger poets Robert Creeley and Paul Blackburn, who he had known through Black Mountain College. Together the two formed a plan with Robert Vas Dias, the Director of the Aspen Writers’ Workshop, to record an interview with Mina Loy, then eighty-two years of age. Although illness prevented Creeley from participating, Blackburn and Vas Dias carried the plan forward, resulting in a conversation that ranged over the course of Mina Loy’s life and included readings by her of her poetry. Selections are included at right.

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Exhibiting Paintings in Paris as a Young Woman
Sound Recording, 1:01
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
How Mina Loy Began Writing
Sound Recording, 0:41
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Reading Her Poem “Love Song I” (on view in Case 3)
Sound Recording, 1:10
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Reading her Poem “Joyce’s Ulysses” (on view in Case 5)
Sound Recording, 2:36
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

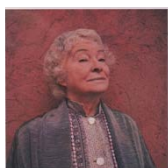
Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable | Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Gallery Labels



JONATHAN WILLIAMS (1929–2008)
Mina Loy, ca.1955
photograph
Private Collection



MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Aviator's Eyes, 1959
holograph (facsimile)
published in Wagner, Spring 1959
Private Collection



JONATHAN WILLIAMS (1929–2008)
Mina Loy, ca. 1955
photograph
Private Collection



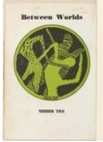
MINA LOY (1882–1966)
untitled (Drawing of Mina Loy's Eyes), n.d.
graphite
10 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (27.31 x 20.96 cm).
Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives

Mina Loy's strong respect for the vision of the poet and artist is conveyed in her poem, "Aviator's Eyes," published as a holograph (in her writing) in 1959. The poem reflects her interest in the cosmos as well as her stark determination to persist in the face of tremendous obstacles. The metaphorical significance of the ocular imagery is reflected in two late portraits of the artist—one by her friend the poet Jonathan Williams, the other a self-portrait. Each distills Loy's likeness to her eyes alone. Appropriately, Loy is represented through Williams's unconventional, but revealing, portrait on the back cover of her 1958 anthology of poems, *Lunar Baedeker & Timetables*.

Case 11: Late Publications and Posthumous Reception

Black Mountain poet and publisher Jonathan Williams published a slim volume of Loy's poems entitled *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables* in 1958, renewing interest in her work as a writer over the ensuing decades. In 1982, Williams published Roger Conover's collection of her writings, *The Last Lunar Baedeker: Mina Loy*, which repositioned her as a poet within the (anti) canonical tradition of twentieth century literature. Conover went on to publish a subsequent textually annotated collection of her work, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy* in 1996, further cementing her recognition. The following year a biography by Carolyn Burke brought further attention to Loy. More recently, the digital project, "Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde," overseen by Suzanne Churchill, Linda Kinnahan, and Susan Rosenbaum, has provided unprecedented access to Loy's life and work. The tributes to Loy provided by the work of Billy Corgan, Thurston Moore, and Raymond Pettibon testify to the ongoing power of Loy's creative legacy for contemporary artists.

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1) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

“Property of Pigeons”

Published in *Between Worlds: An International Magazine of Creativity* 1, no. 2

(Spring/Summer 1961), edited by Gilbert Nieman; published by Alan Swallow for the

Inter American University, Puerto Rico

Cover design by Man Ray

Private Collection



2) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Valentine Postcard, created for the artist’s son-in-law, Frederic Benedict, husband of Fabienne Cravan Lloyd, ca. 1950

collaged paper

Private Collection



3) WILLIAM PHILIPS, PHILIP RAHV, DENISE SCHWARTZ, ET AL., EDITORS

Partisan Review 29, no. 5 (September–October 1952)

Including Mina Loy’s “Idiot Child on a Fire Escape”

Private Collection



4) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

“Aviator’s Eyes”

Published in *Wagner: Literary Magazine* (Spring 1959), edited by Norman Black, et al.

Private Collection



5) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Letter to Jonathan Williams [?], ca. 1955

Collection of Roger Conover

In this letter sent from Aspen, Mina alludes to her accomplishments as a visual artist and her family’s disapproval of the artworks she made while in the Bowery. But she urges her friend to see the works and notes Duchamp’s interest in exhibiting them.



6) MINA LOY (1882–1966)

Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables (recto and verso), 1958

Aspen: Jonathan Williams

Private Collection

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The photograph by Jonathan Williams reproduced on the back of *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables*, which he published, reflects Mina Loy's conviction concerning the far-reaching vision of the poet. The original photograph hangs above the case.



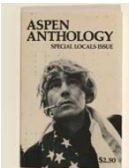
- 7) DJUNA BARNES (1892–1982)
Letter to Fabienne Cravan Lloyd offering condolences on Mina Loy's death,
November 1966
Private Collection



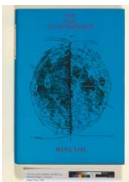
- 8) HERBERT BAYER (1900–1985)
Mina Loy's Gravestone, 1966
photograph
Private Collection



- 9) HOWARD FOX (born 1947) and DAVID MESSERLI (born 1947), editors
Sun and Moon, No. 2, Spring 1976
Including Mina Loy's "Pas de Commentaires! Louis M. Eilshemius," an interview
Private Collection



- 10) KURT BROWN (1944–2013), editor
Aspen Anthology: Special Locals Issue, 1977
With Mina Loy, "Lunar Baedeker," ca. 1921
Private Collection



- 11) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Last Lunar Baedeker, 1982
Edited and Introduced by Roger L. Conover
Highland: The Jargon Society
Collection of Roger Conover

The signed pages of Roger Conover's copy of this volume reveal the numerous distinguished artists, writers, and creative thinkers who attended celebrations to mark the publication of *The Last Lunar Baedeker* and the centenary of Mina Loy's birth.

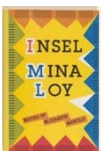


- 12) THE JARGON SOCIETY
Invitation to the launch of *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, 1982
New York
Private Collection



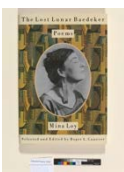
- 13) THE JARGON SOCIETY
Invitation to celebrate Mina Loy's Centennial and publication of *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, 1982
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Private Collection

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Gallery Labels



14) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
Insel, 1933–1953, edited by Elizabeth Arnold
Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991

Insel is Mina Loy's only published novel. Unpublished during her lifetime, despite submissions to New Directions Press and other publishers, the manuscript was eventually shepherded into print by the poet Elizabeth Arnold in 1991. The story has its roots in Loy's work with Julien Levy, who engaged her with the Surrealists and their imaginative worlds. In 1926, the American novelist and art critic Robert Coates published his novel *Eater of Darkness*, melding fantasy landscapes with ambitiously torqued reality. Coates's effort may have piqued Loy's interest in the novel as an art form. The result was *Insel*, which interlaces tangible and psychic realities. Its protagonists are thinly veiled stand-ins for Loy and the German painter Richard Oelze, who was once her tenant. Many ostensibly fictional allusions can be traced to real issues in Loy's life, including dialogues and descriptions of art and lampshade designs, making it difficult to discern fact from fiction in this surreal tract.



15) MINA LOY (1882–1966)
The Lost Lunar Baedeker, 1996
Edited by Roger L. Conover
New York: Farrar Straus Giroux
Private Collection



16) CAROLYN BURKE (born 1940)
Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy, 1996
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
Private Collection



17) BILLY CORGAN (BORN 1967)
Mina Loy (M.O.H.), 2005
digital song track, 4:21
Included in the album *The Future Embrace*
Private Collection

Called out on the cover of his 2005 solo album, Billy Corgan's *Mina Loy (M.O.H.)*, with "M.O.H." short for "My Old Heart," likens a beloved city to a lover. Grappling, through the song's lyrics, with the prospect of the destruction of something beautiful, Corgan vows "Consequences be they what they may/I resolve to never change/I so vow to never yield." His anthem of perseverance despite vulnerability to pain and death resonates with Loy's own remarkable resolve to continue to create and even amplify the boldness of her work despite personal losses, including those of youth and innocence.



18) RAYMOND PETTIBON (BORN 1957)
Pig Cupid, 1985
Artist's Book, Edition of 500 (of which 400 were destroyed)
SST Publications, Lawndale, CA
Private Collection

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Gallery Labels

Pettibon's *Pig Cupid*, which explores a series of troubling relationships and sexual liaisons, takes its title from the first stanza of Mina Loy's *Love Songs I* (1915). The poem can be in its first printing in Case 3 of this exhibition, and a recording of it, as read by Mina Loy in 1965, is available in the adjacent listening station. Loy's poem was widely condemned after it appeared in 1915 for its vivid treatment of sexual desire.



19) THURSTON MOORE (BORN 1958)

Mina Loy, 2011

Digital song track, 4:02

Included in the album *Demolished Thoughts*

Private Collection

Thurston Moore's 2011 song offers a tribute to embracing reciprocal love "without shame." Moore's lyrics call to mind Loy's own ability to pursue her creative and personal passions without regard for social mores as well as her decades-long devotion to her lost lover and husband, Arthur Cravan.