

**Bowdoin College Museum of Art to Host First Retrospective of Poet and Artist Mina Loy**

*Featuring over 80 works and never-before-seen archival material, the exhibition celebrates Loy's remarkable innovation and creative legacy*

**Brunswick, ME—February 1, 2023**—The Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) will organize and present *Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable*, the first monographic presentation of the art of Mina Loy (born Mina Gertrude Lowy, 1882-1966), one of the most challenging poets of the twentieth century. Even though Loy developed a powerful body of visual art—one that was admired by contemporaries such as Marcel Duchamp, who curated a show of her work in 1959—no comprehensive exhibition has addressed the visual production of this pioneering modernist and feminist. Curated by Jennifer R. Gross, the exhibition includes over 60 paintings, drawings, constructions, designs, inventions, and original publications of poetry created by Loy through the course of her life will be united to reveal Loy's omnivorous creativity as an image-maker, author, and cultural arbiter. These pieces are complemented by approximately 20 selected artworks by such friends and associates as Berenice Abbott, Joseph Cornell, Lee Miller, Man Ray, Umbo, and Beatrice Wood. These remarkable objects, drawn from close to a dozen institutional and private collections, will be complemented by extensive, never-before presented, archival materials. A richly illustrated catalogue featuring contributions from Gross, poet Ann Lauterbach, Surrealist scholar Dawn Ades, and writer and editor Roger Conover will be published by Princeton University Press to accompany the exhibition. The show will be on view from April 6 to September 17, 2023.

“We are honored to give Mina Loy her due as an important artist, a catalyzing figure in European and American modernism, although like so many women artists of this period her visibility was often overshadowed by men,” said Anne Collins Goodyear, co-director of the museum. “Loy is sometimes difficult to categorize and has come in recent years to be celebrated for her free verse poetry, yet she was also a prolific and immensely creative visual artist. Through her visual art, designs, poetry, letters, photographs, inventions and patents, visitors will be introduced to the pioneering work of this bold and revolutionary woman, whose important influence is perhaps even more obvious today than it was during her own lifetime.”

*Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable* will trace the development and trajectory of the artist's incisive critical perspective as it infiltrated, cross-pollinated, and honed the ambition of the literary and artistic avant-gardes of France, Italy, Germany, and America in the first half of the twentieth century. Images of Loy taken by her friends and associates Man Ray, Carl van Vechten, Lee Miller, and George Platt Lynes appear in the galleries together with correspondence involving art world visionaries like Mable Dodge Luhan, Peggy Guggenheim, and Marcel Duchamp.

Organized chronologically, the works in this show tell the story of her life as an artist and poet. The exhibition starts with works from her childhood, her years spent as a student in Paris beginning in 1902, and her decade in Florence starting in 1906, highlighting her youthful watercolors of dresses and fashionable women and graphite sketches, including self-portraits. Further segments of the show explore her times in New York, first from 1916 to 1917 and again from 1920 to 1921, where she met and became friends with fellow artists and drew portraits of her artistic companions such as Man Ray and poet Marianne Moore. “Little magazines” featuring her poetry and manifestos are also included, as well as books and newspaper

clippings, many of which highlight her intense relationship with her husband, the boxer and poet Arthur Cravan. Drawings by Beatrice Wood reflect the couple's powerful connection.

Her time in Paris is highlighted by her inventions, photos of which are included in the exhibition, among these are creative lamps, lampshades, and illuminating devices employing unprecedented techniques, materials, and concepts. These include the *Swan Lamp Shade* (c. 1927), an intricate *Globe Lamp* (c. 1925), and a stunning *Calla Lily Vase Lamp* (c. 1927), which mimics a vase of flowers with tiny bulbs in the center of each bloom. The following section, spotlighting her 1933 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery includes her most Surrealist paintings and sketches, including snail-human hybrids in *The Bewitched (Fallen Angels)* (c. 1928), and otherworldly, mystic scenes like the oil painting *Drift of Chaos VI (Butterfly Woman)* (1934). Additional works on paper include portraits and studies of friends and family. Ever nurturing her creative vision, Loy sketched her inventions—both practical and whimsical—including knitting needles with measurements on them (1946), a corset to correct posture, and a curtain inspired by aviation (c. 1940)—the design drawings for which are included in the exhibition.

The final portion of the exhibition includes her large-scale mixed media assemblages made in Aspen, where she spent the last 13 years of her life. Among these are *Prospector I* (1954) and *Prospector II* (1954), both of which are comprised of discarded objects and litter and invoke the aspirations of miners dreaming of riches. Other abstract works, such as "*Sander Gear*" (1955) bring to mind celestial fields, imagery that fascinated Loy throughout her career.

Today, thanks largely to the impact of scholarship on her long-lost poetry in editions by Roger Conover (Bowdoin College class of 1972), a biography by Carolyn Burke published in 1982, and a recent study by Mary Ann Caws (2022), Loy is well-known within literary circles. *Mina Loy: Strangeness is Inevitable* both introduces the work of a powerful female visual artist into the canon from which she has been largely excluded and creates a project that bridges the worlds of the visual and literary avant-gardes. The exhibition adds greater complexity and nuance into our collective understanding of networks of creative innovation during the opening decades of the twentieth century. The exhibition reveals that Loy's influence extended well into the 1960s, as she continued to create, exhibit, and publish up until the time of her death in 1966. The posthumous comprehensive volume of her poetry *The Last Lunar Baedeker* from 1982 is also included in the exhibition, as is the rare 1923 Contact Press edition of *Lunar Baedeker* published in Paris.

By emphasizing Loy's accomplishments in the visual arts, while contextualizing this work within the full breadth of her creative expression—including painting, drawing, poetry, prose, art criticism, fashion design, and industrial design—the exhibition will engage audiences with the remarkable vision of this bold iconoclast.

"This exhibition will expand current considerations of Loy as a noted poet, author, and artistic muse and restore her to the full stature of regard she was held in by her peers as a formidable intellect and artist," said Gross. "It also reveals that Loy can arguably be credited with introducing Italian futurism to America, radicalizing the aspirations of feminism, expanding the aesthetics of Surrealism, and presaging American pop art in her late assemblage constructions, all the while violating entrenched literary decorum and forever altering the breath and cadence of modern verse. The astonishing arc of Loy's creativity presented in the

exhibition mediates the mythology that has built up around her to disclose the real enigma that was Mina Loy.”

**Bowdoin College Museum of Art**

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is the cornerstone of the arts and culture at Bowdoin. One of the earliest collegiate art collections in the nation, it came into being through the 1811 bequest of James Bowdoin III of 70 European paintings and a portfolio of 141 old master drawings. The collection has been expanded through the generosity of the Bowdoin family, alumni and friends, and now numbers more than 20,000 objects, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and artifacts from prehistory to the present from civilizations around the world. [www.bowdoin.edu](http://www.bowdoin.edu)

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