

**Mina Loy**

**Strangeness  
is Inevitable**

**Mina Loy was one of the most provocative and innovative artists and poets of the twentieth century.**

**Loy's forceful intellect and omnivorous aesthetic sensibilities were eagerly welcomed and celebrated by the artistic and literary avant-gardes that defined modernism on both sides of the Atlantic. Her venerable cohort included Margaret Anderson, Louise and Walter Arensberg, Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, Joseph Cornell, Mabel Dodge, Marcel Duchamp, Jane Heap, Julien Levy, Gertrude Stein, and Alfred Stieglitz.**

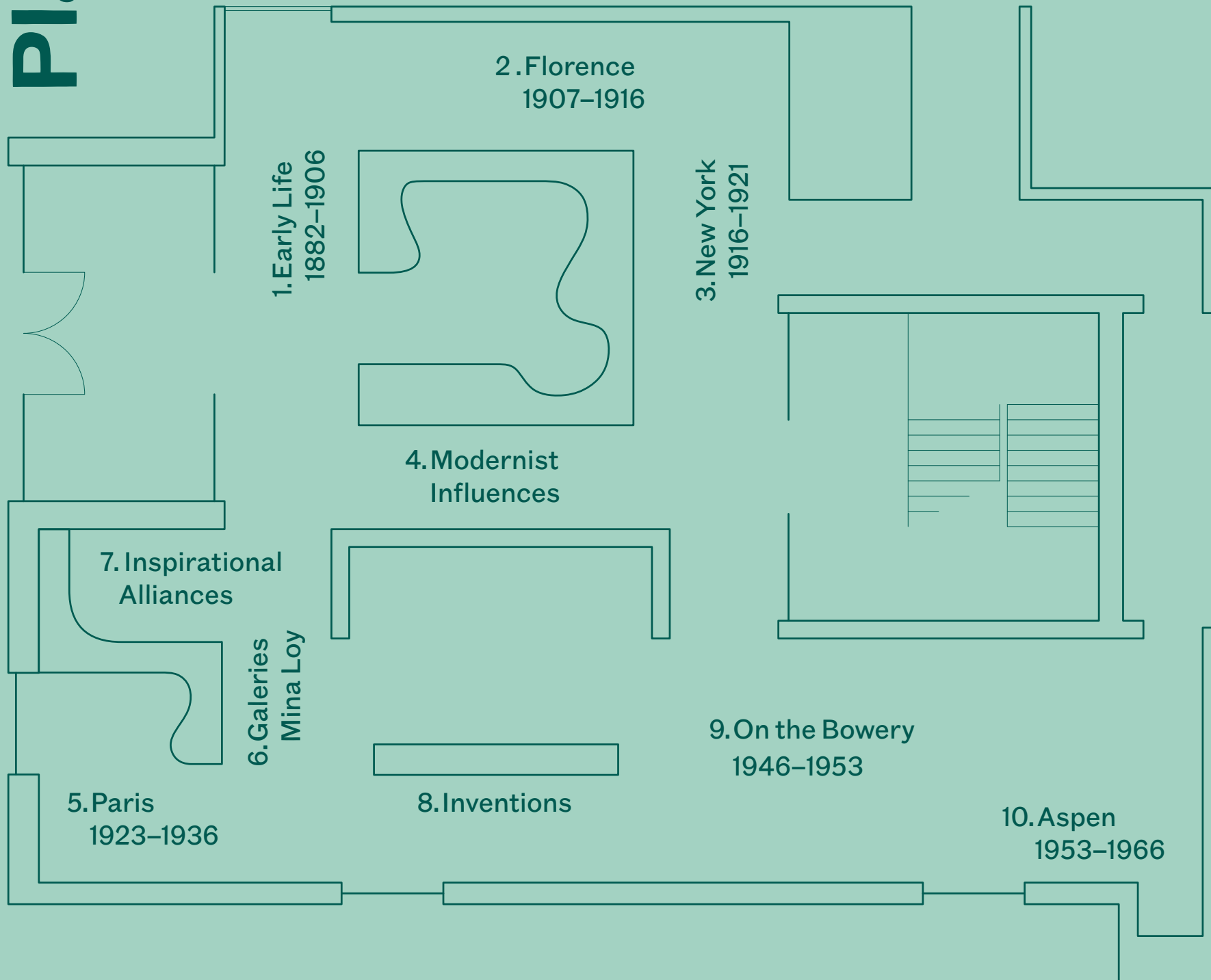
**Through her art, writing, and transatlantic activities, Loy advanced modernist tendencies, introducing Italian Futurism to America, adopting the aspirations of feminism, expanding the aesthetics of Surrealism, and presaging American pop art in**

**her assemblage constructions. To characterize her impact, fellow poet Ezra Pound invented the word "logopoeia": "poetry... akin to nothing but language which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas."**

**For all her accomplishments, Loy remained notoriously elusive, a spiritual believer, and a perpetual "other." The paintings, drawings, constructions, fashion designs, and inventions presented in this exhibition attest to her wide-ranging creativity, and when considered in the context of the arc of her remarkable life, reveal Loy's distinctive contributions to modernism.**

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# Exhibition Plan



# Index

- 7 Early Life
- 11 Florence
- 17 New York
- 23 Modernist Influences
- 27 Paris
- 35 Galleries Mina Loy
- 39 Inspirational Alliances
- 43 Inventions
- 47 On the Bowery
- 51 Aspen

Born Mina Gertrude Lowy in 1882 in London, Mina Loy was the daughter of Sigmund Lowy, a non-observant Jewish Hungarian immigrant father, and Julia Bryan, a conservative, working class Christian English woman, in socially constraining middle-class Victorian England. Loy was precocious and overwhelmed her socially anxious mother; her father, however, a highly successful tailor and amateur painter, recognized his eldest daughter's creative talent, and sponsored her art training in London, Munich, and Paris. While studying at the Académie Colarossi, a Parisian private art school, Loy befriended painter and poet Wyndham Lewis and painter Jules Pascin, who would later, along with writer Gertrude Stein and Futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (F.T.), inspire her self-realization as a modernist.

At Colarossi, Loy also met fellow student, Stephen Haweis, whom she married within a year after learning she was pregnant. Haweis, who came from a reputable English family, would help advance both their careers as artists, while Loy's allowance would support them. Marriage also promised Loy freedom from the threat of a stifling life in England. Loy was naïve, however, about her legal standing; in fact, the arrangement empowered her husband and left her subject to his demands under the threat that he would expose their marriage of convenience to her father. Haweis resisted Loy's request for a divorce for more than a decade, retaining a portion of her family allowance. He did prove adept at negotiating their careers and secured early exhibition opportunities for Loy, including her first one-person exhibition at Carfax Gallery in London in 1912.

1. Artist Unknown  
*Mina Loy, her mother Julia Bryan Lowy, and her sister Dora Lowy*  
1886  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Private collection
  2. Artist Unknown  
*Sigmund Lowy*  
1890  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Location unknown
  3. Artist Unknown  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1897  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Private collection
  4. Mina Loy  
*Sociétaire du Salon d'Automne calling card, Paris*  
ca. 1906  
Ink on paper  
Collection of J. and J. Gordon  
  
Loy continued to paint and draw at home and began to create millinery and clothing designs. In 1904, six of Loy's watercolors were selected for the Salon d'Automne. She was 22. Her work was subsequently exhibited at the Salon in 1905, 1906, 1913, and 1923. She was elected a member of its drawing society in 1906 and served as a juror in 1912. Loy's submissions to the 1906 Salon were noted by the curator and critic Paul Jamot in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* as evoking the work of some of the most worldly, outrageous, even pornographic artists of the day, those who dared to represent the banal and carnal considerations of society. He wrote, "Miss Mina Loy who,
  5. Mina Loy  
*Untitled*  
ca. 1900  
Mixed media  
Collection of J. and J. Gordon
  6. Mina Loy  
*Women in Carriage*  
ca. 1907  
Mixed media  
Collection of J. and J. Gordon
  7. Henri Joel Le Savoureux  
*Stephen Haweis and Mina Loy in Art School*  
1905  
Photograph (Facsimile)  
Location unknown
  8. Stephen Haweis  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1905-1909  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection
  9. Artist Unknown  
*Untitled [Stephen Haweis Studio Portrait]*  
1926  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection
  10. Mina Loy  
*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.
- in her strange watercolors where are combined Guy, Rops, and Beardsley, shows us ambiguous ephebes whose nudity is caressed by ladies in the furbelows of 1885."

11. Stephen Haweis  
*Mina Loy Holding Auguste Rodin Sculpture*  
ca. 1905-1909  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection

12. Stephen Haweis  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1905-1909  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection

13. Stephen Haweis  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1905  
Gelatin silver print  
Collection of Roger Conover

14. Stephen Haweis  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1905-1909  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection

Early in their marriage, Haweis was successful as a photographer, opening an art photography studio with a partner named Henry Coles. Haweis took pictures of his beautiful wife around 1905, and these images stand as some of the most captivating images ever made of Loy. Her coy expressions and provocative postures suggest her not as a passive muse for her husband, but as an aesthetically astute and sexually aware collaborator.

15. Mina Loy  
*Devant le Miroir*  
1905  
Graphite on brown paper mounted on cardboard  
Collection of Roger Conover

In Paris, Loy's role as a young wife and mother restricted her world and her work in the year following her marriage to Stephen Haweis. Her first child, Oda, contracted meningitis and died on her first birthday. Loy was devastated, and she captured her somber self-regard as an apparition of grief in this drawing.

Oda's death motivated Loy to reclaim her personal life. She addressed the mental weariness, or "neurasthenia" as it was called at the time, brought on by her grief through visits to a psychiatrist named Henri Le Savoureux. The young doctor became a friend and lover, and Loy became pregnant once again. Haweis agreed to "accept" the child as his own if he and Loy left Paris and if she gave him another child. Living a pretend marriage, they moved to Florence, where they hoped the strong expatriate community would support their art careers. A daughter Joella was born in July 1907, and a son, Giles, fathered by Haweis, was born in early 1909.

16. Mina Loy  
*La Maison en Papier*  
1906  
Gouache and graphite  
Private collection

17. Mina Loy  
*L'Amour Dorloté par les Belles Dames [Love Among the Ladies]*  
Before 1906  
Watercolor  
Collection of Roger Conover

In Florence, Loy found her place among the literati and began her transformation and ascendance into public view as a modernist. Joining the social set at Villa Curonia, the home of American heiress and patron Mabel Dodge (later Luhan), her enlightenment came through two remarkably dissimilar sources: Gertrude Stein and F.T. Marinetti. In 1911, Loy was introduced to Stein and her partner Alice Toklas through Colarossi student Alice Wood. Toklas wrote of their meeting that “a friendship with her commenced that lasted over the years,” describing Loy as “beautiful, intelligent, sympathetic and gay.” Although in this case, Toklas invoked the word “gay” to mean joyful, as was common at the time, Stein’s household did provide for Loy a model of unconventional living. The friendship continued through the 1920s and 1930s when they all lived in Paris. Stein’s writing was of immediate interest to Loy, and Stein shared early manuscripts with her, including one for her novel *The Making of Americans*. Years later Stein wrote, “Mina Loy...was able to understand without the commas. She has always been able to understand.”

In 1914, Loy and Haws separated physically if not legally, and Loy took in a young American painter, Frances Simpson Stevens, as a tenant to help make ends meet. Stevens brought the Italian Futurist movement home with her in the persons of Carlo Carrà, Marinetti, and Giovanni Papini. These three founders of Futurism swept Loy up in the power of their radical messaging, manifesto writing, and the esprit they exuded in their passion to overthrow convention. While discerning about Futurists’ ideas, adopting their outrage and

rejecting their patriarchy, Loy was more impulsive about her personal life and soon embarked on what would become perhaps the transformative relationship in her life, an affair with Marinetti.

Marinetti had published his initial “Manifesto of Futurism” five years before meeting Loy, and she would take up the bellicose format in her ambitious “Feminist Manifesto” of 1914. In it, she called for “absolute demolition” and urged women not to seek to be men’s equal, but to realize their own actuality. Loy further tested the Futurist aesthetic of frenzy and fragmentation with three portraits of Marinetti for *The First Free Exhibition of International Futurist Art* in Rome. Their relationship did not last, and Loy turned to Papini, who had previously been Loy’s intellectual sparring partner. While he and Marinetti both proved imperfect lovers, together they ignited Loy’s artistic and feminist aspirations.

18. Mina Loy  
“Virgins Plus Curtains  
Minus Dots” (poem)  
Clara Tice  
*Virgin Minus Verse* (illustration)  
Published in *Rogue*, August 15, 1915 (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover

19. Mina Loy  
*Untitled*  
ca. 1915  
Published in *Le Crapouillet*, ca. 1915  
Collection of Roger Conover

20. Artist Unknown  
*Mina and Joella*  
1909  
Gelatin silver print  
Private collection  
When her daughter Joella became ill with an infant paralysis (most likely polio) that worsened into a coma in 1909, Loy turned to a Christian Science practitioner for her healing. Joella recovered miraculously, and the experience transformed Loy into a person of faith. Her resulting complex belief system positioned her outside mainstream modernist thought for the rest of her life.

21. Mina Loy  
*Mina Loy Letter to Stephen  
Haweis*  
March 1914  
Ink on paper (Facsimile)  
Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Yale Collection of  
American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and  
Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

22. Mina Loy  
*Mina Loy Letter to Carl van  
Vechten*  
ca. December 17, 1914  
Ink on paper (Facsimile)  
Carl Van Vechten Papers, Beinecke Rare Book  
and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

23. Mina Loy  
*Mina Loy Letter to Mabel Dodge*  
ca. September 17, 1910  
Ink on paper (Facsimile)  
Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Yale Collection of  
American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and  
Manuscript Library, Yale University Library  
Preoccupied by the humiliation of her failing marriage and subsequent poor health, Loy maintained a subdued presence in Florence until meeting Mabel Dodge 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 her earliest writings. Dodge reported Loy as making dark genre paintings during these years. Haweis began to absent himself from their life, involving himself in various affairs and undertaking travel to create exhibition opportunities for Loy and himself.

24. Mina Loy  
“Love Songs”  
1915  
Poem, published in *Others* magazine,  
July 1915 (Facsimile)  
Private collection  
Wyndham Lewis once stated that the first World War had stopped art dead, yet it was not able to stop Mina Loy. While the rest of Europe moved with trepidation, Loy launched herself upon the world. She poured herself into her writing, decrying the unsatisfactory nature of women’s dependence on others and the entrenched behaviors that limited their self-aspiration and realization. In 1915, Loy wrote to van Vechten of her “Long Songs”: “— the whole will make a progression of realizations— crescendo & transcendo!”  
The first “Long Songs” were published in July of that year, and while Loy was confident they were “the best since Sappho,” she grew overwhelmed by the outraged response they garnered. Editor Alfred Kreymborg decried their reception, explaining that her experimental syntax and frank sexual content “was denounced as nothing less than lewd... Had a man written these poems, the town might have viewed them with comparative comfort. But a woman wrote them, a woman who dressed like a lady and painted charming lamp-shades.” Selling her husband’s family heirlooms to buy her ticket, she left her children with their nurse Giulia and sailed for America in October of 1916.

25. Mina Loy  
*Fille en robe rouge*  
1913  
Watercolor and graphite  
Collection of Roger Conover

26. Mina Loy  
*Fashion Designs*  
ca. 1915  
Watercolor and gouache  
Collection of Roger Conover

In the summer of 1913, the New York journalist Carl van Vechten came to Dodge’s home Villa Curonia. He wrote of being instantly charmed by Loy: “She made an unforgettable figure with her gray-blue eyes, her patrician features, her waved black hair, parted in the center. Tall and slender, her too large ankles were concealed by the tight hobble-skirts she wore. Her dresses, of soft dove-coloured shades, or brilliant lemon with magenta flowers, or pale green and blue, were extremely lovely. Strange, long earrings dangled from artificially rosy ears: one amber pair imprisoned with flies with extended wings.” He was commenting on clothing of her own design. During the years of her ascendancy as a writer, Loy also made hats, designed clothes, and sketched covers for fashion magazines. Already at the time of their meeting, Loy gave van Vechten numerous clothing designs to take back with him in an unfortunately unsuccessful attempt to gain access to the New York fashion world. Impressed by her writing, meanwhile, van Vechten also began to serve as her literary agent.



27. **Mina Loy**  
*Maison des bains au Forte dei Marmi*  
1913  
Gouache and ink with traces of graphite on paper mounted on cardboard  
Collection of Roger Conover
28. **Mina Loy**  
*The Beach*  
ca. 1911  
Watercolor and graphite  
Collection of Roger Conover
29. **Mina Loy**  
“Aphorisms on Futurism”  
*Camera Work* 45, January 1914  
Ink on paper (Facsimile)
30. **Alfred Stieglitz**  
*Camera Work* 45  
January 1914  
Printed book with photogravure and halftone illustrations [from Met Museum website] (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover  
Dodge and van Vechten delivered Loy’s Futurist-inflected poems to America. “Aphorisms on Futurism,” Loy’s first text in print appeared in the New York vanguard magazine *Camera Work*, alongside a play by Stein and an art review by Dodge. The text was an incantation about self, a meditation on individual potential and self-determination achieved by radically cutting off one’s past. The layout recalled Futurism in its word placement and typographic play. More of Loy’s writing would soon appear in the little magazine *Rogue*, published by Allan and Louise Norton, and Alfred Kreymborg’s *Others*, setting the stage for her in-person debut in New York.

31. **Mina Loy**  
*Feminist Manifesto*  
1914  
Holograph manuscript, (Facsimile)  
Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

“This woman is half-way through the door into Tomorrow.”- New York Sun, February 13, 1917.

For the first time in her life, Loy arrived in a new city as an independent artist. She was immediately welcomed into the circles of Louise and Allen Norton, Alfred Kreymborg, and Walter and Louise Arensberg. It was at the Arensbergs that The Society of Independent Artists was launched and where Loy was able to put her hand in as a contributor, alongside Walter Arensberg, Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierré Roche, and Beatrice Wood, to their experimental journal *The Blind Man*. There she also met Man Ray, the American photographer who would later become her neighbor and a close friend in Paris. That autumn, she started a lampshade business, inventing shades made of parchment rather than silk, which paid her rent and kept her fed beyond the Arensbergs' famous hors d'oeuvres.

Immersing herself in the vibrant rhythm of New York, Mina Loy explored its cultural tapestry from 1916 to 1917. Upon her return in 1920-1921, she observed the city's transformation, shaping her distinctive perspective on its dynamic evolution.

32. Alfred Kreymborg  
Script for the play *Lima Beans*  
December 1916  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
33. Alfred Kreymborg  
*Lima Beans* program  
December 1916  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
34. Artist Unknown  
Mina Loy and William Carlos Williams in Alfred Kreymborg's *Lima Beans*  
Staged at the Provincetown Playhouse, December 1916  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
35. Allen Norton, Editor  
*Rogue 1*  
April 1, 1915  
Journal (Facsimile)  
Private collection
36. Marianne Moore  
“Those Various Scalpels”  
1917  
Published in *The Lantern*, later in *Contact Magazine* (January 1921) (Facsimile)  
Bryn Mawr College Libraries, Special Collections
37. Mina Loy  
*Bust-Length Portrait of Marianne Moore*  
ca. 1916  
Pencil on wove paper  
The Rosenbach, Philadelphia
38. Beatrice Wood  
*Lit de Marcel (Beatrice Wood; Marcel Duchamp, Mina Loy, Charles Demuth, Aileen Dresser)*  
1917  
Watercolor  
Collection of Francis M. Naumann and Marie T. Keller, Yorktown Heights
39. Beatrice Wood  
*Poster for The Blind Man's Ball, Webster Hall, New York City*  
Color lithograph and relief print (poster)  
Private collection
40. Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roche, Beatrice Wood  
The Richard Mutt Case Interior: *The Blind Man*, no. 2 showing Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*  
May 1917  
*The Blind Man*, No. 2 (Facsimile)
41. Mina Loy  
“In...Formation”  
1917  
*The Blind Man*, No. 1, April 1917 (Facsimile)  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art. 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, 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. 2019.49.1.
42. Mina Loy  
“Oh, Marcel—otherwise: I Also Have Been to Louise's”  
May 1917  
*The Blind Man*, No. 2 (Facsimile)

43. **Man Ray**  
*Portrait (Mina Loy)*  
1920  
Gelatin silver print  
Collection of Roger Conover
44. **Author unknown**  
“Do you Strive to Capture the Symbols of your Reactions? If Not You are Quite Old Fashioned”  
February 1913  
*New York Sun*, February 13, 1917 (Facsimile)  
The press soon identified the multitalented artist and social butterfly, Mina Loy, as THE modern woman. In the *New York Sun* on February 13, 1917, she was introduced with glowing perplexity: “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? ...” Answers to these questions came later in the same article: “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.”
45. **Artist Unknown**  
*Mina Loy dressed for the Blindman’s Ball*  
May 1917  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Private collection
46. **Marcel Duchamp, co-editor; Henri Pierre Roché, co-editor; Beatrice Wood, co-editor**  
*The Blind Man*, No. 1, 8 pages  
April 1917  
Journal (Facsimile)
47. **Mina Loy**  
*Colossus*  
Not dated  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University  
While it is not evident that Arthur Cravan’s creative influence came to bear greatly in Loy’s art in the years to follow (See work #50), both he and the longing his absence inspired were recurring sources for her writing. She drafted numerous versions of a narrative account of Cravan’s life entitled *Colossus*. His presence also haunts poems such as “Widow’s Jazz.”
48. **Mina Loy**  
*The Widow’s Jazz*  
1931  
Published in *Pagany: A Native Quarterly* 2:2 (Spring 1931), edited by Richard Johns (Facsimile)  
Private collection
49. **Artist Unknown**  
*Arthur Cravan*  
April 1917  
Photograph, from *The Soil: A Magazine of Art*, April 1917  
(Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover
50. **Artist Unknown**  
*Arthur Cravan in the Ring*  
ca. 1916  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Even as Mina Loy took New York by storm, fate would have her step away from her career once more, although this time it was for love. At the Arensbergs’ she met Arthur Cravan, whose notoriety as a provocateur, publisher, nephew of Oscar Wilde, and boxer preceded him. While their connection remained quixotic to those around them, Loy found in Cravan an intellectual and spiritual connection she had never felt before. They became inseparable that summer until Cravan left the country in order to avoid military conscription. From Mexico, he wrote Loy declaring his love. In January 1918, she went to Mexico, married Cravan, and was soon pregnant. Her father had recently died, leaving her free to divorce Haws. That spring, Haws returned to Florence then soon left for the Caribbean, taking their son Giles with him. Loy’s father left her two hundred pounds although the inheritance check was slow to reach Loy and Cravan in Mexico, where they experienced true hardship. When the money finally arrived, they determined to continue to Buenos Aires. Loy set off on a passenger ship and Cravan was to join her there via sailboat, but he never arrived. His disappearance remains a mystery.
51. **Mina Loy**  
“International Psycho-Democracy”  
1921  
Published in *Little Review* 8:1 (Autumn 1921) (Facsimile)  
Private collection  
Loy stayed on to Buenos Aires alone, expecting Cravan’s arrival. She kept busy writing a manifesto called *International Psycho-Democracy*, which some scholars have interpreted as a memorial to her life with Cravan. It more readily reads as Loy’s response to the racial and social inequities she had witnessed in Mexico, as well as the rise of Communism. After a few months, when Cravan failed to appear, Loy traveled to England to have their daughter, Jemima Fabienne Cravan Lloyd, at her maternal home.  
After Fabienne’s birth, Loy made her way back to Florence, and only a few months later in March 1920, again left her children with their nurse Giulia to set sail for New York in search of Cravan. The art world had moved on. The Arensbergs’ circle had lost steam due to prohibition. Loy reconnected with friends like Man Ray, Duchamp, and the writer Djuna Barnes (whom she had met in Provincetown in 1915), cementing these lifelong friendships. After a brief stay in a sanatorium in Pennsylvania due to what she called her “very smashed up” health, Loy worked actively to promote her art and writing.

## Brancusi's Golden Bird

The toy  
become the aesthetic archetype

As if

some patient peasant God  
had rubbed and rubbed  
the Alpha and Omega  
of Form  
into a lump of metal

A naked orientation  
unwinged unplumed  
—the ultimate rhythm  
has lopped the extremities  
of crest and claw  
from  
the nucleus of flight

The absolute act  
of art  
conformed  
to continent sculpture  
—bare as the brow of Osiris—  
this breast of revelation

an incandescent curve  
licked by chromatic flames  
in labyrinths of reflections

This gong  
of polished hyperaesthesia  
shrills with brass  
as the aggressive light  
strikes  
its significance

The immaculate  
conception  
of the inaudible bird  
occurs  
in gorgeous reticence...

Reprinted from *The Lost Lunar  
Baedeker*, edited by Roger Conover  
(Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1996).

Writing poems or criticism on art and artists she admired helped Loy to hone her modernist sensibility. Throughout her life, Loy paid homage to such luminaries as Constantin Brancusi, Duchamp, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Marinetti, Stein, and Edgar Allen Poe. Her comprehension of modernism as a means to channel her intuitive responses to her own experience soon became paramount, for as she wrote, “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?”

52. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (Portrait of Man Ray)*  
ca. 1925  
Graphite  
Collection of Roger Conover

53. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (Portrait of Flossie [Florence] Williams)*  
1925  
Graphite  
Collection of Roger Conover

54. Mina Loy  
“Gertrude Stein”  
1924  
*The Transatlantic Review*, November 1924, Ford Madox Ford, ed  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection

55. Mina Loy  
*Gertrude Stein*  
1924  
*Interior: The Transatlantic Review*, November 1924, Ford Madox Ford, ed  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection

56. Mina Loy  
“The Starry Sky’  
of Wyndham Lewis”  
ca. 1917  
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923  
(Facsimile)  
From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover.  
New York, 1996

57. Wyndham Lewis  
“The Starry Sky”  
ca. 1917  
Published in *Little Review*, November 1917  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

58. Lee Miller  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1930  
Gelatin silver print  
Collection of Roger Conover

59. Mina Loy  
“Joyce’s Ulysses”  
ca. 1921-22  
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923  
(Facsimile)  
From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover.  
New York, 1996  
Private collection

60. Mina Loy  
*Portrait of James Joyce*  
1922  
*Vanity Affair*, April 1922 (Facsimile)  
Private collection

61. Mina Loy  
“Poe”  
ca. 1921-22  
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923  
From *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, edited by Roger L. Conover. New York, 1996  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection

62. Mina Loy  
*Portrait of Freud*  
1924  
Drawing (Facsimile)

63. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (Portrait of Jules Pascin)*  
ca. 1923  
Drawing (Facsimile)

64. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (Portrait of Constantin Brancusi)*  
ca. 1924  
Drawing (Facsimile)

65. Constantin Brancusi  
*Golden Bird*  
ca. 1920  
Photograph by the artist, reproduced in *Brancusi*, The Brummer Gallery, New York, 1926 (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover

66. Mina Loy  
“Brancusi’s Golden Bird”  
1922  
First published in *Lunar Baedeker* [sic], 1923  
Reproduced in *C. Brancusi*, by the Romanian critic Vasile Georgescu Paleolog,  
Editions Forum, Bucharest, 1947 (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover

While passing through Paris in 1921, Loy saw Brancusi’s *Golden Bird* in the collection of sculptor Mariette Mills (another version of the work was shown at and purchased by The Arts Club of Chicago; it now resides at The Art Institute). Inspired by his radical reductivism, Loy wrote a poem about the sculpture, which she called “the Alpha and Omega of Form [rubbed] into a lump of metal.” Loy’s poem appeared in *The Dial* facing the sculptor’s transcendent photograph of the work. In gratitude for her words, and as a testament to their friendship, Brancusi gave Loy a copy of this photograph.

67. Scofield Thayer  
*The Dial* 73, no. 5, including Mina Loy, “Brancusi’s Golden Bird”  
November 1922 (Facsimile)  
Private collection

68. Mina Loy  
*Auto-Facial Construction*  
1919  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

69. Mina Loy  
“Three Graces”

*Playboy* 1:7 (May 1921) (Facsimile)

Collection of Roger Conover

70. Mina Loy  
*Drawing featuring gypsies with  
young girl*  
1921

*Art Review*, October 1921 (Facsimile)

Private Collection

71. Mina Loy  
“Three Studies”

*Art Review*, October 1921 (Facsimile)

Collection of Roger Conover

72. Newspaper Enterprise  
“Would You Be Different? Madame  
Loy Shows How”  
1921

*Pittsburgh Press*, April 3, 1921 (Facsimile)

73. Mina Loy  
“Apology of Genius”

*The Dial*, July 2022 (Facsimile)

Collection of Roger Conover

In the spring of 1922, Loy traveled to Berlin with her two daughters. There, she began to regain her footing, taking classes with artist Alexander Archipenko. She also wrote “Apology of Genius,” her treatise on artistic suffering, which was published in *The Dial* that same year. One critic wrote of it: “in itself a proof of genius...a genius that rises from a level of emotion and attitude which is as nearly common human territory as one can ever expect to find in a poet.”

74. Carl van Vechten  
*Mina Loy*

1937

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Roger Conover

By the spring of 1923 Loy had resettled in Paris and found herself once more amid the city's avant-garde circles. Her second period in the City of Lights would prove generative and lead to success and economic independence. First, however, she received news from Italy that her son Giles had died of cancer the previous summer. Devastated, Loy plunged into the darkest depression of her life, even as she managed to forge ahead with her work. She submitted a painting to the Salon *d'automne* that year, and simultaneously published *Lunar Baedeker*, her first volume of poetry. She also concentrated on various inventions and business endeavors while eventually making significant visual breakthroughs. As the portraits and drawings on view attest, Loy thrived during this time at the center of a compelling social set that included Flossie and William Carlos Williams, Peggy Guggenheim, Man Ray, Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas, Brancusi, and Sylvia Beach, owner of the English-language Parisian bookstore Shakespeare & Co.

75. Djuna Barnes  
*Caricatures of Mina Loy, Marsden Hartley, and Gertrude Stein*  
November 3, 1923  
*New York Tribune*, November 4, 1923  
(Facsimile)
76. Natalie Barney  
*Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy, Nice, France*  
ca. 1925  
Gelatin silver print  
(Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover
77. Artist Unknown  
*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  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, inv. PH 1212 A.
78. Artist Unknown  
*Brancusi's studio, Paris: Constantin Brancusi, Tristan Tzara, unidentified woman, Mina Loy, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson*  
ca. 1925  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Private collection
79. Artist Unknown  
*Group Portrait of American and European Artists in Paris*  
1923  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover  
  
(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)
80. Artist Unknown  
*Jane Heap, Mina Loy and Ezra Pound in Paris*  
1923  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Carolyn Burke Collection on Mina Loy and Lee Miller. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
81. Mina Loy  
"Modern Poetry"  
April 1925  
*Charm* 3:3  
(Facsimile)
82. Alfred Kreymborg  
Contact Press advertisement, featuring Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedeker* [sic]  
1923  
Paper  
Private collection
83. Mina Loy  
*Lunar Baedeker* [sic]  
1923  
Book, Contact Press: New York (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover

84. **Artist Unknown**  
*Joella, Fabienne, and Mina Loy at Paris Carnival*  
 ca. 1926  
 Gelatin silver print  
 Private collection

In 1927, Julien Levy, a Harvard graduate and acquaintance of Duchamp, appeared in Paris and became enchanted by Loy and her daughters, falling in love with Joella. The couple married within the year and departed for New York. In Joella's absence, Loy spent more time with writer Djuna Barnes and became a frequent habitu  of Natalie Barney's Acad mie des Femmes, where she read her own work and lectured on Stein. The shop she had founded with Peggy Guggenheim hung on for a few more years but eventually failed after the stock market crash of 1929.

For the next six years, Loy worked as the European agent for Levy's soon-to-be-famous gallery in New York. In this role she thrived as well as she had in her own gallery business. She discovered interesting artists for Levy, brought excellent work out of their studios, and arranged shipping, framing, and payment of sales proceeds. She began to frequent a different milieu, one centered on the vital and still-developing movement of Surrealism. While Loy admired the artists in this circle, she took their work at times for "black magic" and questioned their pursuit of sensation, or what she termed concessions to "that series of ocular surprises propelling the history of art."

85. **Artist Unknown**  
*Mina Loy in Paris*  
 ca. 1927  
 Gelatin silver print  
 Private collection
- Loy quickly arrived at a new pictorial form which consisted of cut-paper bouquets mounted in antique period frames sourced at the Paris flea market (see video on view). These *Jaded Blossoms*, as she would soon call them, were memorial bouquets to Arthur Cravan, her former lover, and her son Giles. Laborious and handmade, they aptly rendered the spiritless fatigue of her existence. Around this time Loy took up in earnest her acquaintance with art world doyenne Peggy Guggenheim, who thought Loy's innovations were brilliant. Loy and her daughters were frequent guests at Guggenheim's country retreat, and Loy painted a mermaid mural there.

86. **Mina Loy**  
*Untitled (Sleeping Figure)*  
 ca. 1929  
 Pencil drawing  
 Collection of J. and J. Gordon

87. **George Platt Lynes**  
*Mina Loy*  
 ca. 1930-1934  
 Gelatin silver print  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniv. Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001

88. **Lee Miller**  
*Mina Loy*  
 ca. 1930  
 Gelatin silver print  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniv. Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001

89. **Mina Loy**  
*Untitled (Surreal Scene)*  
 ca. 1935  
 Gouache with collage on panel  
 Collection of Roger Conover

*Untitled (Surreal Scene)*, ca. 1935, remains a stylistic anomaly in Loy's visual art, although the motifs of love, sexuality, and femininity are recognizable across her oeuvre. It is unknown whether she made the work in Paris or New York, but it eventually came to be owned by Levy, most likely as a gift from Loy. The iconography includes references from both Greek mythology and the Bible, including what appears to be the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the bones of a whale, alluding to the 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.

90. **Mina Loy**  
*Untitled (verso of Levy Exhibition Announcement)*  
 ca. 1933  
 Pencil on paper  
 Private collection

91. **Mina Loy**  
*Woman Weaver*  
 1930  
 Graphite, charcoal, colored pencil and wash on paper  
 Private collection

92. **Mina Loy**  
*The Bewitched*  
 Mixed media on board  
 Collection of Roger Conover

93. **Mina Loy**  
*Dawn (L'Aube)*  
 1932  
 Mixed media on board  
 Collection of Roger Conover

In addition to hiring her as his agent for Paris-based artists, Julien Levy implored Loy to produce an exhibition of new paintings for his gallery in New York. In February 1933 the show finally took place with a series of paintings in various shades of blue on celestial themes. The suite introduces an ensemble of heavenly hosts framed against the backdrop of the troposphere, the layer of atmosphere closest to earth. Loy created a novel painting technique with this series using a mixture of sand, gesso, crushed glass, and plaster, a "fresco vero" suffused with luminosity.

94. **Mina Loy**  
*Moons I*  
 1932  
 Mixed media on board  
 Private collection

95. **Mina Loy**  
*Teasing a Butterfly*  
 1932  
 Mixed media on board  
 Private collection

96. **Mina Loy**  
*Light*  
 1932  
 Mixed media on board  
 Private collection



97. Mina Loy  
*Stars*  
1932

Mixed media on board  
Collection of Roger Conover

The motif of “blind angels” appears in most of the paintings that Loy made for her exhibition at Julien Levy Gallery. It was perhaps inspired by the recent publication of Wyndham Lewis’s play *Enemy of the Stars*, 1932. Theories of the “aura” and the “astral body” were commonplace in many treatises at this time on spiritism, which sought to image and engage connection with spirits in the afterlife. Aura was thought to be an immaterial radiation emanating from the head, and thus rendering visible a mental and emotional state. Levy christened the series Loy’s *bleuille*, which translates loosely as “halo tinged with blue in the beam of light.” Their visages convey not human character but the transcendent qualities of awe, fear, wonder, hope.

98. Mina Loy  
*Drift of Chaos II (Hermes)*  
1933

Oil on panel  
Collection of Roger Conover

Despite selling only one painting from Loy’s first exhibition at his gallery, Levy eagerly wanted her to have a second show; as an enticement, he wrote her enthusiastically about the success of fellow artist Florine Stettheimer. Unfortunately, Levy profoundly misjudged how his comments would be received. Loy took Levy’s directive to use lively color as a prompt for the darkest paintings she had ever made—the *Drift of Chaos* series, 1933. These paintings have a strong correspondence in measure and imagery to her poem “Ephemerid,” written around the same time.

While the series was grounded in surrealist compositional devices—fragmented subjects, shifting perspective, and ambivalent grounds—it quickly moved to establish a dark, aqueous netherworld inhabited by Charon, Sphinx, giants, mayflies, putti and specters, and traversed by lone figures and kings and queens in tiny skiffs and dragon boats. Loy described her painting endeavor through the protagonist in her novel *Insel*: “I felt, if I were to go back, begin a universe all over again, forget all form I am familiar with, evoking a chaos from which I could draw forth incipient form that at last the female brain might achieve an act of creation.” A second exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery never materialized.

99. Mina Loy  
*Drift of Chaos III (Venus)*  
1933

Oil on canvas  
Collection of Roger Conover

100. Mina Loy  
*Drift of Chaos VI (Butterfly Woman)*  
1933

Oil on board  
Collection of Roger Conover  
Julien Levy Gallery  
Exhibition 1933

After the closing of the Galleries Mina Loy (described in the next section), Loy and her younger daughter Fabienne were struggling to make ends meet. She wrote to Levy in July of 1934, “I should like to have my old pictures sent back [as] I am going to try to get a show there [London] to make some money... —I will let you know where to send them.” In the meanwhile, she reached out to many allies to try to place her work. Despite everyone’s efforts, Loy could not solve her financial problems, and she decided it was time to move to New York. With war rumbling in the distance, Loy sent Fabienne ahead and sold her apartment at a loss. In 1936 she set out for New York, unknowingly ending the independence she had fought so hard to obtain as a woman and artist. Loy crossed the Atlantic for the last time.

101. Julien Levy  
*Mina Loy at the Marché aux Puces (Flea Market)*, Paris  
1932

Digitized film, 2:00  
Private collection

## Apology of Genius

Ostracized as we are with God—

The watchers of the civilized wastes  
reverse their signals on our track

Lepers of the moon  
all magically diseased  
we come among you  
innocent  
of our luminous sores

unknowing  
how perturbing lights  
our spirit  
on the passion of Man  
until you turn on us your smooth fools' faces  
like buttocks bared in aboriginal mockeries

We are the sacerdotal clowns  
who feed upon the wind and stars  
and pulverous pastures of poverty

Our wills are formed  
by curious disciplines  
beyond your laws

You may give birth to us  
or marry us  
the chances of your flesh  
are not our destiny—

The cuirass of the soul  
still shines—  
And we are unaware  
if you confuse  
such brief  
corrosion with possession

In the raw caverns of the Increate  
we forge the dusk of Chaos  
to that imperious jewellery of the Universe  
—the Beautiful—

While to your eyes  
A delicate crop  
of criminal mystic immortelles  
stands to the censor's scythe.

Reprinted from *The Lost Lunar  
Baedeker*, edited by Roger Conover  
(Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1996).

In 1925 Guggenheim and Loy opened *Galleries Mina Loy*, a lamp and lampshade shop, and sometimes gallery, on rue du Colisée. Loy's lamp and lampshade designs would bring her international recognition as a decorative artist. The shop benefited from the sensation of the 1925 International Decorative Arts Exhibition in Paris, a grand and very well-attended trade fair that incited an international craze for what would become known as Art Deco. The gallery business prospered, and at one point Loy employed a dozen French girls to assist in manufacturing her designs. The shop received extraordinary press coverage and took in orders from England, America, and elsewhere on the European continent. Loy increased her clientele through advertising and attempted to patent many of her designs, while her daughter Joella managed the staff and finances.

102. Mina Loy  
Paris Business Card  
1926  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
103. Artist Unknown  
“Well-Known American Society Girl and British Artist Open Lamp Shop in Paris”  
ca. 1926  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Private collection
104. Mina Loy  
*Galleries Mina Loy Stationery*  
1926  
Private collection  
Loy began to thrive on her success and financial autonomy. Her essay, “Modern Poetry”, was printed in *Charm* that year, and she finished her epic “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose.” The profits enabled her to furnish a new apartment, the charm of which gallerist Julien Levy would later describe as an extension of her creative expression:  
“...Designed with many pensées [ideas] but very few pence, expressing Mina’s imagination, the flat became for me a fairyland dream. Rooms were divided by wirework or wickerwork cages in which birds flew or hopped about. Doors were always glass, the panes covered with translucent material so that there was privacy but also light. Indoor plants were living everywhere. Whatever patching of crumbling walls, or decorative coloring there might be was mostly done with scraps of metallic paper— wrappings from countless bonbons pasted together in floral collages. And colored cellophane was everywhere... it was an encounter with beauty that had no practical, moral or prestige implications whatsoever.”
105. Artist Unknown  
*Laurence Vail exhibition brochure, Galleries Mina Loy, Paris*  
1926  
Collection of Roger Conover
106. Author unknown  
“*Les Abat-Jour de Mina Loy*”  
1927  
Published in *Art et Industrie*, January 1927 (Facsimile)
107. Joella Haweis Bayer  
Photograph of Mina Loy,  
*Tulip Lamp*  
1927  
Gelatin silver print (Facsimile)  
Collection of Roger Conover
108. Mina Loy  
*Ship Lamp*  
1928  
Advertisement, *Art et Industrie*, October 1928 (Facsimile)  
Private collection
109. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (Figure for Lampshade Fashion Design)*  
ca. 1926-1930  
Watercolor and gouache on paper  
Collection of J. and J. Gordon

110. Mina Loy  
Lamp Design  
ca. 1927  
Ink on paper  
Collection of Roger Conover

111. Mina Loy  
*Design for Airplane Lampshade*  
December 9, 1941  
Ink on paper  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and  
Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

# Inspirational Alliances: Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp

Joseph Cornell attended Loy's 1933 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, where he would come to exhibit his own work. The two artists eventually became close friends, discovering their shared belief in Christian Science and suspicion of what they called the Surrealists' "black magic." Their mutual admiration rested on a shared veneration of beauty and cosmic good. Visiting each other and exchanging source material for their works, Loy and Cornell shared what was for both a rare spiritual friendship.

In Duchamp, Loy found a further co-conspirator and eventual ally. The two had met in New York decades earlier, in 1916, and had together gone through the epochal scandal unleashed by Duchamp's submission of a porcelain urinal for exhibition the following year (an event addressed in the little journal *The Blind Man*, which Loy helped to edit and publish). Ever since, Duchamp and Loy remained in each other's orbit, even in later life when Loy was living on the Bowery in difficult circumstances. In 1959, Duchamp, with the help of Levy, secured Loy's final exhibition at the Bodley Gallery in New York.

112. **Mina Loy**  
*Insel*  
1933-1953  
Published in 1991, Santa Rosa:  
Black Sparrow Press  
Collection of The Arts Club of Chicago  
Loy's job with Julien Levy enabled her to continue to paint, and as she became more engaged with the Surrealists and their imaginative worlds, she embarked on an entirely new writing project: a novel. *Insel* (German for "island") reads like a drug-induced odyssey between the rational and psychedelic worlds. Its protagonists are thinly veiled stand-ins for Loy and the German painter Richard Oelze and while there are many touchstones that can be traced to real occurrences in Loy's life, including dialogues and descriptions of art and lampshade designs, her writing style makes it difficult to discern fact from fiction.
113. **Man Ray**  
*Portrait of Mina Loy*  
1920  
Gelatin silver print  
Collection of Roger Conover
114. **Mina Loy**  
*Levy Exhibition Announcement*  
1933  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
115. **Joseph Cornell**  
*Imperious Jewelry of the Universe (Lunar Baedeker): Portrait of Mina Loy, Daguerreotype-Object*  
1938  
Assemblage of silvered glass, glass shards, cut-out printed illustration, and gelatin silver print in artist's frame  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniv. Acquisition. The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001  
This portrait of Mina Loy by Joseph Cornell incorporates a photograph of her by Man Ray. The work exists as a testimony to Loy's profound friendship with both artists and with her son-in-law Julien Levy. When in Paris, Levy would join Loy as she scoured the flea markets for art-making materials. There he found small boxes for Cornell to use in his constructions. The fragmentation and inherent sense of play and perpetual transformation that Cornell established in this portrait of Loy indicates his profound knowledge of her complex character and charm.
116. **Joseph Cornell**  
*Roma Baedeker*  
November 21, 1946  
(Facsimile)  
Private collection
117. **Mina Loy**  
*Lunar Baedeker and Time-Tables*  
ca. 1958  
Inscribed to Marcel Duchamp  
Collection of Roger Conover

118. Berenice Abbott  
*Mina Loy's No Parking*  
ca. 1959  
Photograph; Invitation for Mina Loy:  
Constructions, Bodley Gallery, April 14–25, 1959  
Private collection

119. Denise Browne Hare  
*Marcel Duchamp Wearing "Sexy"  
Crown, Designed by Mina Loy*  
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)

120. Jemima Fabienne Cravan  
*Lloyd Benedict 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

121. Mina Loy  
*10 Untitled Drawings*  
1936-1953  
Graphite on paper  
Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of  
Art, Library and Archives

This rare suite of drawings has only recently come to light and provides remarkable insight into Loy's drawing process. Her quick record of her observations and her interest in the street life around her informed the expressive postures and visages of her late constructions.

122. Joseph Cornell  
*Untitled (Hotel de l'étoile series)*  
ca. 1952  
Private Collection

123. Joseph Cornell  
*Letter to Mina Loy*  
August 1, 1943  
Ink and collage on paper  
Private collection

Loy's lone exhibition at the Levy Gallery held ongoing inspiration for Cornell. In November 1946 he wrote to her: "The indelible impression of your sky-blue paintings... All of the above seems sometimes so evanescent and nebulous that I have never even mentioned the trifle to anyone. But terms like 'evanescent' and 'nebulous' are defeatist, are they not, to those who like ourselves are tortured most of the time by their reality? I have generally paid a pretty high price for the above kind of experience however silly this might sound to some. But way down deep these things can be unconscious, although sturdy, weapons against discouragement. And though my attempt at communication sometimes seems as shabby as the paint on the 'enseigne' I can still rejoice that a glorious "light" once illumined it for me ..."

After a particularly productive period in Paris, Loy arrived in New York, just before the start of war in Europe, with nothing to do and no daily routine. She was adrift creatively, socially, and economically. She still received \$40 a month from her mother, enough to cover rent but insufficient for expenses. Her daughter Fabienne found work, but their circumstances continued to decline. In 1940 they moved into a rooming house where they used a common kitchen and shared a bedroom. Loy's contemporaries later recalled her as deeply depressed during this time.

Too poor to purchase art supplies, Loy began to doodle, drafting inventions on scraps of envelopes and stationery. They ranged from children's toys to greeting cards: a Valentine with a wind-up beating heart, tubular Christmas tree lights, and *Chatoyant* (a structural material of combined plastic and metal that she thought could be used in manufacturing). She carried on with new lampshades, a device to clean outside windows from the inside, and the *Corselet* (*Armour for the Body*), "an efficient supplement to physical culture exercises to correct middle-aged figure curvature." Her vision of humanity remained unflinchingly practical. Yet while Helena Rubinstein purchased a lipstick case that Loy had invented, her other ideas found no ready takers.

124. Mina Loy  
*Knitting Needles with Measurements*  
September 28, 1946  
Ink on paper  
Collection of Roger Conover
125. Mina Loy  
Trademark application letter to unknown recipient  
August 6, 1940  
Collection of Roger Conover
126. Mina Loy  
"Towards the Unknown"  
1942  
Interview in *View* 1 (February–March 1942)  
Private collection
127. Mina Loy  
Documentation of alphabet toy  
ca. 1940  
Manuscript  
Collection of Roger Conover
128. Mina Loy  
*Alphabet Games*  
1940  
ink on paper (Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
129. Mina Loy  
*Fashion sketches*  
September 19, 1941  
Colored pencil (Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
130. Mina Loy  
*Proposed slogan for Helena Rubenstein Perfume*  
July 15, 1940  
Private collection
131. Mina Loy  
*Study for Monument to Basketball*  
Ca. 1945  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
132. Mina Loy  
*Window Washer Invention*  
June 26, 1946  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
133. Mina Loy  
*Window Washer Invention*  
July 3, 1946  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
134. Mina Loy  
*Chatoyant Invention*  
ca. 1945  
4 pp. (Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library
135. Mina Loy  
Design, possibly for Fabric  
ca. 1941  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library

136. Mina Loy  
Design for Dress Material, with  
Victory "V"  
1941  
(Facsimile)  
Mina Loy Papers, Yale Collection of American  
Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript  
Library, Yale University Library

137. Jonathan Williams  
*Mina Loy*  
ca. 1955  
Photograph  
Private collection

# On the Bowery 1946–1953



In 1946 Loy became a naturalized citizen of the United States. Her daughters, who had each gotten married by then, moved her to a communal house in the Bowery, a neighborhood known for accommodating the indigent and unhoused, where she was extremely pleased to establish a new community and expand her studio practice. Contrary to later myths that she lived in New York only as an eccentric recluse, her friends recalled that throughout the 1940s she was socially active.

Loy began to make experimental three-dimensional relief constructions made of refuse assemblage paintings featuring the neighborhoods homeless, who bought her cigarettes and called her “The Duchess.” As a non-conformist, she held a lifelong empathy for outsiders in an upturned world rife with poverty and displacement.

138. Mina Loy  
*Untitled (The Drifting Tower)*  
ca. 1950  
Cut paper and mixed media collage on canvas  
Collection of Roger Conover

139. Mina Loy  
*Nectar*  
ca. 1950  
Cut-paper and mixed-media collage on board  
Collection of Roger Conover

140. Mina Loy  
*Christ on a Clothesline*  
ca. 1949  
Collection of Roger Conover  
Two remarkable examples of Loy’s late-life constructions exhibited at the Bodley Gallery—*Christ on a Clothesline* and *Communal Cot*—offer her take on the dire conditions and spiritual possibilities of those in poverty. The former presents a deflated Christ hanging in front of a mottled cityscape. The figure’s drawn face belies the toil of life and redemption. While the stretched rope clearly refers to the common practice of drying clothes on urban rooftops, it may also harken back to a practice known as a “twopenny hangover,” popularized in London during the Depression, in which the indigent were allowed to rest by leaning over a stretched rope while seated. *Communal Cot* likely references a similar circumstance seen in New York. There, for a fee, unhoused men paid to sleep in abutting partitions on the ground. This collage uses cut paper, cardboard, and rags to produce a compendium of distinct faces and postures, individuating each character. Loy’s deep consideration for the details in these works evidences her empathetic connection to the vagrant people that were her neighbors on the Bowery.

141. Mina Loy  
*Communal Cot*  
1949  
Cut-paper and mixed-media collage on board  
Private Collection

142. Mina Loy  
*Untitled*  
ca. 1950  
Cut-paper and mixed-media collage on board  
Private collection

143. Mina Loy  
*Prospector 1*  
1954  
Mixed media on paper mounted to panel  
Collection of Roger Conover  
Only a few artworks remain from Loy’s years in Aspen. The aspirational gold prospector became Loy’s final subject, seen here in *Prospector 1* and *Prospector 2*. These paintings are distillations of Loy’s lifelong preoccupation with hands, faces and base human passions. One figure, his head and hair a tangled mop, his eyes aglow, spies his treasure from the top edge of the composition. Cast below him is a field of scattered “coins,” crushed cans and lids.

144. Mina Loy  
*Prospector 2*  
1954  
Mixed media on paper mounted to panel  
Collection of Roger Conover

145. Mina Loy  
*Untitled*  
ca. 1955  
Metal mounted on cardboard  
Collection of Roger Conover

146. Mina Loy  
*Snow Crop*  
ca. 1955  
Tin can lids mounted on board  
Collection of Roger Conover

## Moreover, the Moon

Face of the skies  
preside  
over our wonder.

Fluorescent  
truant of heaven  
draw us under.

Silver, circular corpse  
your decease  
infects us with unendurable ease,

touching nerve-terminals  
to thermal icicles

Coercive as coma, frail as bloom  
innuendoes of your inverse dawn  
suffuse the self;  
our every corpuscle become an elf.

Reprinted from *The Lost Lunar  
Baedeker*, edited by Roger Conover  
(Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1996).

It eventually became too difficult for Joella and Fabienne, both settled in Aspen, Colorado, to manage their mother's affairs from such a distance. In 1953, Fabienne brought Loy to Aspen, under the pretense of a family visit. Loy closed the door to her studio and unwittingly began her last relocation. In Aspen, Loy kept in touch with New York friends, whom she encouraged to bring visitors to look at the art works left in her Stanton Street apartment in the hope of perpetuating her life as an independent artist. Finally in 1959 Duchamp and Levy secured her an exhibition of the postwar assemblage paintings at the prominent Bodley Gallery in New York.

Stuart Preston of the *New York Times* wrote that Loy's assemblages were formidable in their opposition to mainstream art and even the politics surrounding such art. He judged her work to be "between Dada and social commentary" with approval to be "downright sinister" and bearing a slightly apocalyptic undercurrent. Loy's work and innovation were recognized by others as well; for example, she earned the Copley Foundation Award for Outstanding Achievement in Art.

147. Mina Loy  
*Untitled*  
ca. 1955  
Mixed media  
Collection of Roger Conover

148. Mina Loy  
*Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias: Exhibiting Paintings in Paris as a Young Woman*  
1965  
Sound Recording, 1:01  
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, whom 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.

149. Mina Loy  
*Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias: How Mina Loy Began Writing*  
1965  
Sound Recording, 0:41  
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing  
University of Pennsylvania

150. Mina Loy  
*Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias: Reading her Poem "Love Song I," (1965)*  
Sound Recording, 1:10  
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing  
University of Pennsylvania

151. Mina Loy  
*Interview with Paul Blackburn and Robert Vas Dias: Reading her Poem "Joyce's Ulysses"*  
1965  
Sound Recording, 2:36  
Downloaded from PennSound: Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing  
University of Pennsylvania

Loy continued to make constructions in Aspen until her death in 1966. She remained an unhappy outsider there, gathering her art supplies along the town's back alleys.

Loy once said art was a protest. As an artist she elected to inveigh against convention, patriarchy, obscurity, mediocrity, black magic, poverty, and most of all silence. To be an artist meant one had the power and the means to raise one's voice in ways that mattered. On a fragment of paper found in her archive she 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."

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Curator: Janine Mileaf  
Curatorial Assistant: Mia Morettini

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