



LACMA | Evenings for Educators | February 7, 2012

In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States

About the Exhibition

Driven by an impulse for independence and self-expression, women surrealist artists such as Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington, Helen Lundeborg, and others were masters at using art to subvert traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and motherhood. The first large-scale survey of its kind, *In Wonderland* brings together approximately one hundred and seventy-five surrealist works by forty-seven women artists including painting, sculpture, photography, and other works on paper. During wartime, the geographic landscapes of Mexico and the United States allowed these artists to freely delve deep into their subconscious and dreams to create art that shocks, delights, and amazes. *In Wonderland* journeys through their fantastical worlds and bears witness to their relentless self-discovery. The exhibition is on view January 29–May 6, 2012 in the Resnick Pavilion at LACMA.

About this Resource

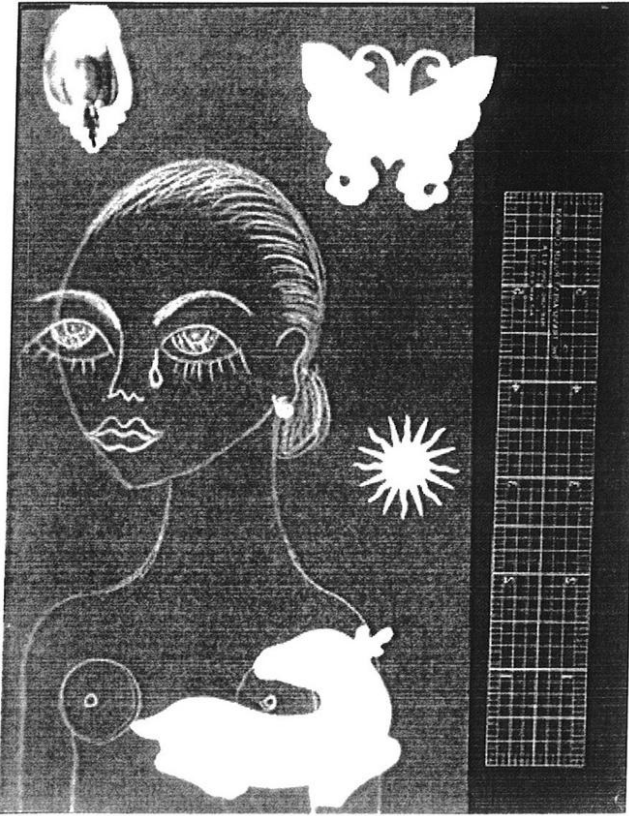
Designed as a complement to the Evenings for Educators program, Surrealism and Women Artists, this resource highlights a selection of artists featured in the exhibition. These twentieth-century artists represent different aspects of surrealism, for example: Frida Kahlo's continual reinvention of persona, Helen Lundeborg's classical representations, Lola Alvarez Bravo's concern for social justice, and Rosa Rolanda's lesser-known autobiographical and experimental work.

The themes that dominated the work of women surrealists in Mexico and the United States reflected the artists' past experiences, present-day situations, fears, hopes, and desires. These artists also helped set the stage for the feminist movement by creating art that challenged established social institutions and gender boundaries. Because much of the art of women surrealists was self-referential in nature, portraiture was an ideal vehicle for exploring identity. Within that genre, self-portraits were

essential, whether they were presented as straightforward depictions, autobiographical or fabricated stories, or symbolic still lifes.

Share the enclosed images with your students. Use or adapt the following discussion questions and activities to your students' diverse needs and learning styles.

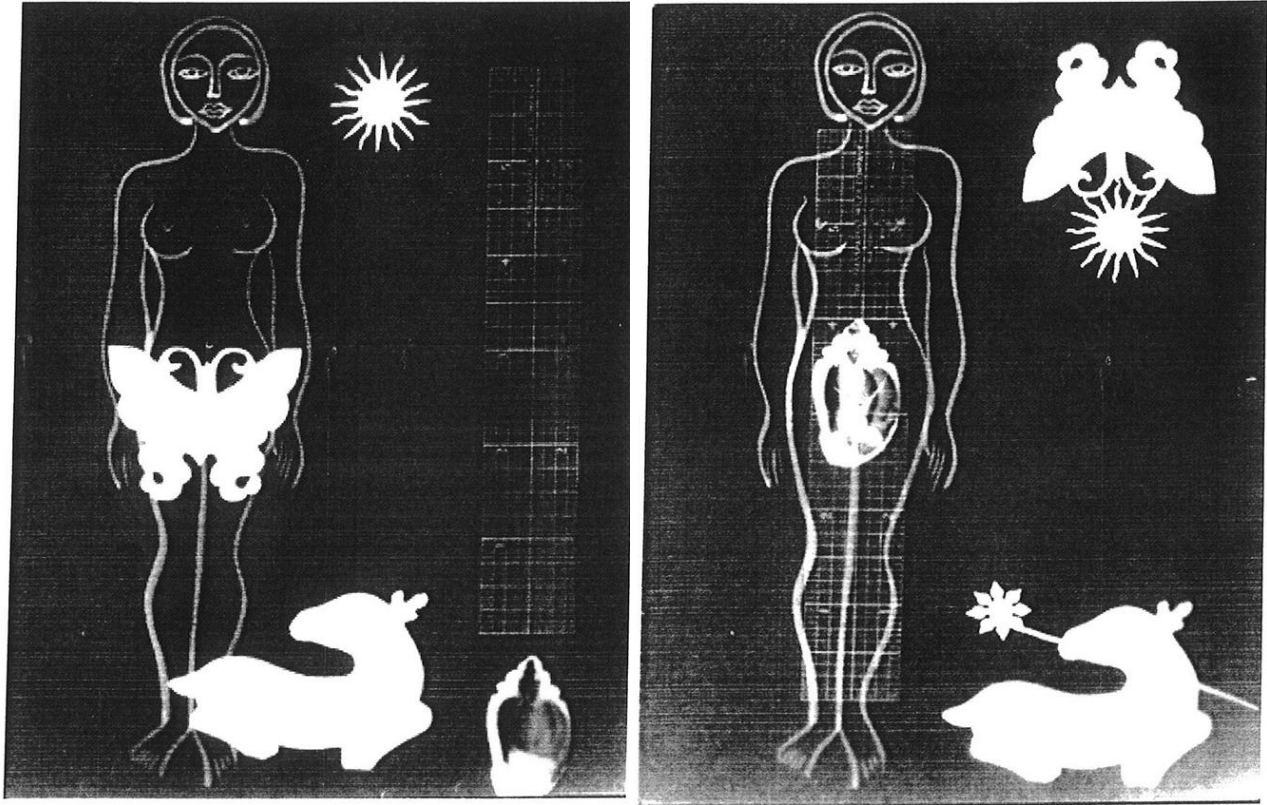
- **Medium & Message**—Surrealist artists experimented with a variety of visual media such as painting, photography, photogram, collage, and montage. Study the artworks in this curriculum and think about the messages they convey. How does the artist's choice of medium help express this message? Write this message in your own words using a literary medium such as narrative or poetry.
- **Manipulating Reality**—An uncanny distortion of perspective unites many surrealist works. Pick one of the enclosed artworks to study and consider how the artist plays with space to create an illusion through the manipulation of perspective, depth, or scale.
- **Image & Identity**—Think about all the ways you can produce a self-portrait—through drawing, painting, photography, even writing (i.e. autobiography). A portrait can not only capture a person's likeness but also his or her personality, interests, and life story. Make a list of words that describe your personality, such as your favorite colors, places, and things to do. Include many of these characteristics in a self-portrait that tells us about you. Consider the setting, what you will hold, what you will wear, and the pose you will take. Supplement the composition with symbolism and imagery that are important to your heritage or to your family's background or country of origin.



ROSA ROLANDA
(United States, 1895–1970, active Mexico)
Self-Portrait Photogram, c. late 1920s
Gelatin silver print photograms, 8³/₈ x 6¹/₂ in.
Collection of Adriana Williams. © Rosa Covarrubias.
Photo © Courtesy of Historical Design Inc., New York, NY

ROSA ROLANDA
BORN 1895, AZUSA, CALIFORNIA
DIED 1970, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Originally from California, Rosa Rolanda began her career in New York in 1916 as a celebrated Broadway dancer. Rolanda was introduced to the photogram technique—that is, cameraless photographs—in the 1920s, either during her tour as a dancer with the Ziegfeld Follies in 1923, when painter and photographer Man Ray (United States, 1890–1976) photographed her, or after she and her husband, the artist Miguel Covarrubias (Mexico, 1904–1957), returned to Paris in September, 1926.



ROSA ROLANDA

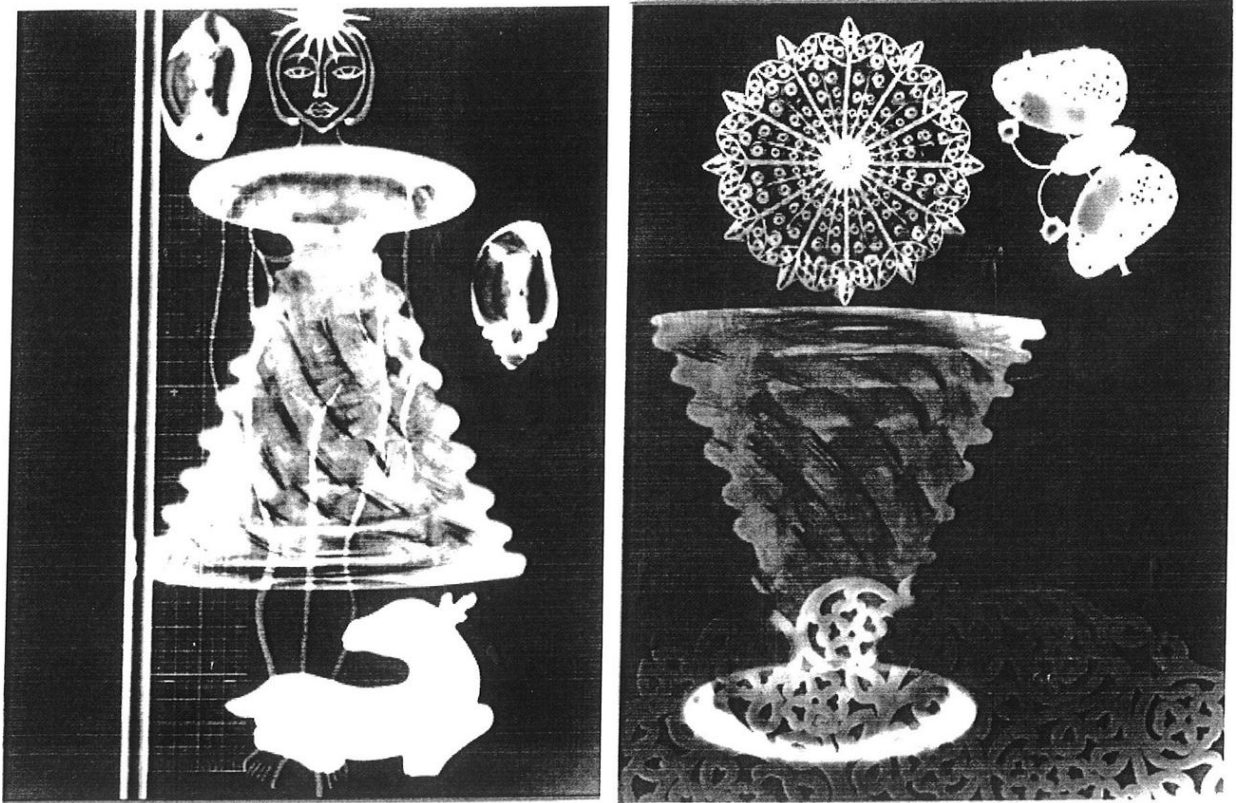
(United States, 1895–1970, active Mexico)

Drawing Photograms, c. late 1920s

Gelatin silver print photograms, each: 8½ x 6½ in.

Collection of Adriana Williams

© Rosa Covarrubias. Photo © Courtesy of Historical Design Inc., New York, NY



ROSA ROLANDA

(United States, 1895–1970, active Mexico)

Drawing Photograms, c. late 1920s

Gelatin silver print photograms, each: 8½ x 6½ in.

Collection of Adriana Williams

© Rosa Covarrubias. Photo © Courtesy of Historical Design Inc., New York, NY



ROSA ROLANDA

(United States, 1895–1970, active Mexico)

Autorretrato (Self-Portrait), 1952

Oil on canvas, 33⁷/₈ x 43³/₈ in.

Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City

© Rosa Rolanda, Courtesy Blaisten Collection. Photo © Francisco Kochen



FRIDA KAHLO

(Mexico, 1907–1954, active Mexico and United States)

Cocos gimientes (Weeping Coconuts), 1951

Oil on board, 9¹/₈ x 12 in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

The Bernard and Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art (M.2004.283.2)

© 2012 Banco de Mexico Diego Rivera & Frida Kahlo Museum Trust

Reproduction of Frida Kahlo governed by Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura.

Photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA

FRIDA KAHLO

BORN 1907, COYOACÁN, MEXICO

DIED 1954, COYOACÁN, MEXICO

Frida Kahlo is best known for her highly personal self-portraits, in which she utilized imagery from Mexican folk art and pre-Columbian symbolism. Kahlo began to paint in 1925, while recovering from a streetcar accident that left her permanently disabled. She underwent more than thirty operations, and many of her approximately two hundred paintings explore her experiences with pain. They also chronicle her turbulent relationship with Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Mexico, 1886–1957), whom she married in 1929.



FRIDA KAHLO

(Mexico, 1907–1954, active Mexico and United States)

Las dos Fridas (The Two Fridas), 1939

Oil on canvas, 68³/₈ x 68¹/₂ in.

Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City

© Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F.

/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Reproduction of Frida Kahlo governed by Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura.

Photo © Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City



HELEN LUNDEBERG

(United States, 1908–1999)

Self-Portrait (with Landscape), 1944

Oil on Masonite, 15¼ x 27¼ in.

Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Gift of the Lorser Feitelson and Helen Feitelson Lundeberg Foundation

© The Feitelson / Lundeberg Art Foundation.

Reproduced by Permission. Photo © Jack Abraham

HELEN LUNDEBERG

BORN 1908, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DIED 1999, LOS ANGELES

Helen Lundeberg sought to create art that would reveal the subconscious workings of the mind in a rational way. In 1933 Lundeberg and her husband, Lorser Feitelson (United States, 1898–1978), founded the so-called New Classicism movement and in 1934 they issued its manifesto—the sole manifesto issued by a group in the United States to respond to European surrealism.



HELEN LUNDEBERG

(United States, 1908–1999)

Double Portrait of the Artist in Time, 1935

Oil on Masonite, 47¾ x 40 in.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, museum purchase

© The Feitelson / Lundeberg Art Foundation. Reproduced by Permission.

Photo © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY



HELEN LUNDEBERG

(United States, 1908–1999)

Microcosm and Macrocosm, 1937

Oil on Masonite, 38¼ x 13¼ in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds
provided by Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Honeyman Jr. (M.2003.50)

© The Feitelson / Lundeberg Art Foundation. Reproduced by Permission.

Photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA



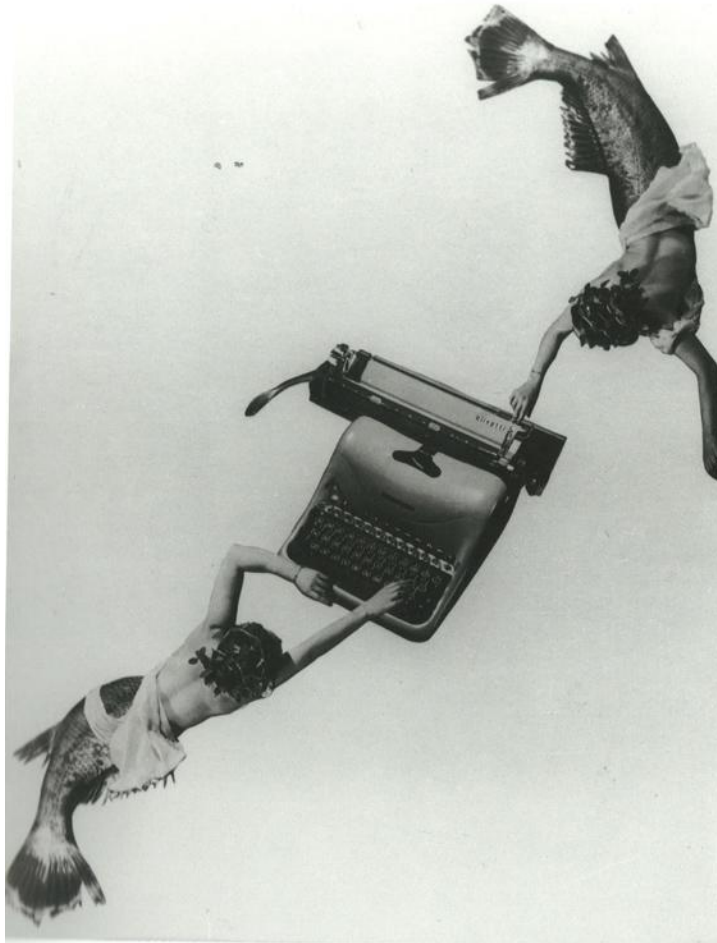
HELEN LUNDEBERG
(United States, 1908–1999)
The Shell, 1951

Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the Feitelson Revocable Trust (M.89.108)

© The Feitelson / Lundeberg Art Foundation. Reproduced by Permission.

Photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA



LOLA ALVAREZ BRAVO
(Mexico, 1907–1993)

Sirenas del aire (Mermaids of the Air), c. 1935–36, printed c. 1958
Gelatin silver print photomontage, 7⁷/₈ x 6 in.

Private collection, courtesy Galería Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City
© 1995 Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation.
Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA, by Jorge Pérez de Lara

LOLA ALVAREZ BRAVO
BORN 1907, LAGOS DE MORENO, MEXICO
DIED 1993, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Lola Alvarez Bravo actively participated in promoting women's rights and used her art to comment on social justice and civic issues. In addition to creating photomontages with strong elements of journalism, she pushed the boundaries of photography beyond pure documentation, working as a photojournalist, a portrait photographer, and an architectural photographer. She was briefly married to photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexico, 1902–2002) and learned photography by assisting him.



LOLA ALVAREZ BRAVO

(Mexico, 1907–1993)

Unos suben y otros bajan (Some Rise and Others Fall). c. 1940s

Gelatin silver print, 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.

Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson:
Lola Alvarez Bravo Archive Collection Center for Creative Photography,
University of Arizona © 1995 The University of Arizona Foundation



LEONORA CARRINGTON

(England, 1917–2011, active France, Mexico, and United States)

Self-Portrait, c. 1937–38

Oil on canvas, 25³/₈ x 32 in.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002 (2002.456.1)

© 2011 Leonora Carrington / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY

LEONORA CARRINGTON

BORN 1917, LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

DIED 2011, MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Over a career of more than seventy years, Leonora Carrington created a mythical and often humorous world of human-animal hybrids in her paintings, sculptures, and stories. In 1937 Carrington settled with the surrealist painter Max Ernst in France. She participated in the International Exhibition of Surrealism in Paris and later immigrated to Mexico City.



LEONORA CARRINGTON

(England, 1917–2011, active France, Mexico, and United States)

Maja del tarot (Double Portrait of María Félix), 1965

Oil on canvas, 79 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 70 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Collection of the Artemundi Group

© 2011 Leonora Carrington / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Photo courtesy of a private collection.



RUTH BERNHARD
(Germany, 1905–2006, active United States)
In the Box—Horizontal, 1962
Gelatin silver print, 25 x 35¾ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the Estate of Ruth Bernhard (M.2007.155)
Reproduced with permission of the Ruth Bernhard Archive
Princeton University Art Museum. © Trustees of Princeton University
Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

RUTH BERNHARD
BORN 1905, BERLIN, GERMANY
DIED 2006, SAN FRANCISCO

Best known for her photographs of female nudes, Ruth Bernhard also regularly photographed dolls and puppets, which she placed in uncanny and humorous juxtapositions. As she said later, "I don't plan things; they plan for me. Photographs speak to me and I obey."



LEE MILLER

(United States, 1907–1977, active England, France, Egypt, and United States)

Solarized Portrait of Dorothy Hill (Profile), 1932

Gelatin silver print, 9½ x 7½ in.

Lee Miller Archives, England

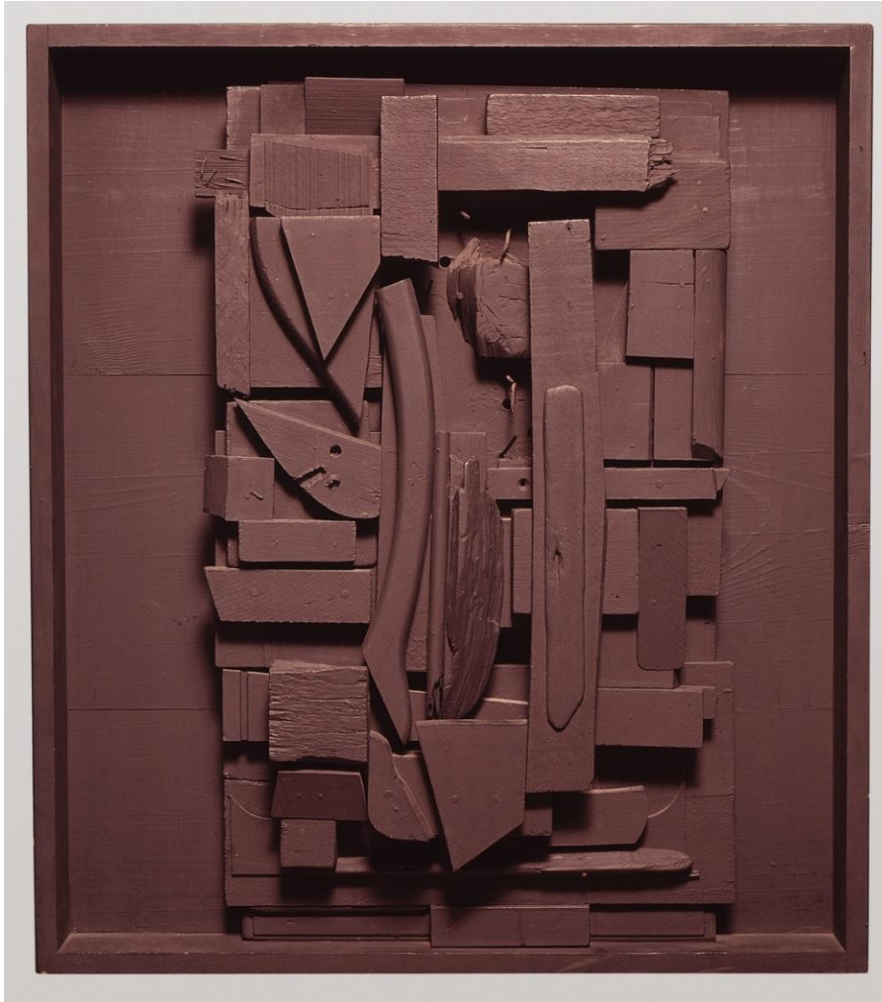
© Lee Miller Archives, England 2011. All rights reserved. www.leemiller.co.uk

LEE MILLER

BORN 1907, POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK

DIED 1977, CHIDDINGLY, EAST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

Lee Miller's photography encompassed a wide range of imagery—from the world of high fashion to the atrocities of World War II—and captured surprising juxtapositions with surrealist black humor. She studied in Paris with the surrealist photographer Man Ray, from whom she learned many progressive photographic techniques.



LOUISE NEVELSON

(Russia, 1900–1988, active United States)

Verso, 1959

Wood and black paint relief, 32¹/₈ x 28³/₁₆ x 3³/₁₆ in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Blankfort through the Contemporary Art Council (M.73.80)

© 2011 Estate of Louise Nevelson / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA

LOUISE NEVELSON

BORN 1900, KIEV, RUSSIA (NOW KIEV, UKRAINE)

DIED 1988, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Described by the art historian Dore Ashton as the "grand mistress of the marvelous," Louise Nevelson is best known for her assemblages of found objects. She worked as an assistant to Diego Rivera, and later visited pre-Columbian ruins where she gained inspiration for the scale and geometry that mark most of her significant mature works.



DOROTHEA TANNING

(United States, b. 1910, active United States and France)

Xmas, 1969

Fabric, metal, and wool, body: 69⁵/₈ x 19³/₄ x 20¹/₂ in.; appendage: 4³/₈ x 3¹/₂ x 7⁷/₈ in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the 2010 Collectors Committee, with additional funds generously provided by Jodie Evans with Lekha Singh, The Rosenthal Family Foundation, Peg Yorkin, the Kayne Foundation, and Susan Adelman in honor of the artist's 100th birthday, Irene Christopher, Viveca Paulin-Ferrell, American Art Deaccession Funds, Janice G. Gootkin, The Eileen F. and Mort H. Singer, Jr.

Family fund in honor of Ilene Susan Fort, and J. Patrice Marandel (M.2010.36a–b)

© 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Photo © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA

DOROTHEA TANNING

BORN 1910, GALESBURG, ILLINOIS

Dorothea Tanning is one of the foremost surrealists in the United States. In her early paintings she depicted quiet interiors featuring young women in mysterious, emotional states. Tanning married Max Ernst in 1946, and later the couple moved to France, where Tanning began to work in a more abstract style that included soft sculptures like the one above in LACMA's collection.

Cover: Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird (Autorretrato con collar de espinas y colibrí)*, 1940, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, © 2011 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, México, D.F./ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, reproduction of Frida Kahlo governed by Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBA)


This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico. It was made possible through a generous grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art. The organizers are grateful for the special collaboration of the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta), Mexico, and National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA), Mexico. The Los Angeles presentation was made possible in part by The Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts and is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

TERRA
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

CONACULTA

 Instituto
Nacional de
Bellas Artes

These curriculum materials were written and edited by Lynn LaBate, Rachel Bernstein, and Jennifer Reid, and designed by Jenifer Shell, with selections adapted from the exhibition text and catalogue for *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*. Copyright © 2012 Museum Associates/Los Angeles County Museum of Art. All rights reserved.

Evenings for Educators is presented by **CHASE** 

Additional funding is provided by the Joseph Drown Foundation, Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation, and the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

Education programs at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art are supported in part by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the William Randolph Hearst Endowment Fund for Arts Education, and Rx for Reading.

 **DCA** DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
City of Los Angeles