

ARTS

The Timeless Shimmer Of Beatrice Wood

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I'm a culture maven and arts enthusiast.

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Installation view of Beatrice Wood: Drawings, Prints, Ceramics. Courtesy of L.A. Louver. PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE, COURTESY OF LA LOUVER

Sometimes a gallery show can remind you not just of an artist but of a rare personage.

This is the case with *Beatrice Wood: Drawings, Prints, Ceramics*, which opened on September 21 at L.A. Louver in Venice, CA., and runs through October 29, 2022. I am sorry I didn't get to this exhibition sooner, but it's worth seeing before it closes.

Wood, who was called 'the Mama of Dada', was born in 1893 and lived to 1998, when she was 105. She was an extraordinary person whose life encompassed the 20th Century and several of its art movements. She was a true bohemian who rejected the conventional planned trajectory of her life as the daughter of wealthy socialites to become an artist.

In New York in 1916, already a friend of the avant-garde composer Edgar Varese, she met Marcel Duchamp, and Henri-Pierre Roche' and the three of them founded the art magazines *The Blind Man*, and *Rongwrong*. There are many who claim that Roche's novel, *Jules and Jim* (which became a classic film by Francois Truffaut) was based on the love triangle between the three of them.

Wood moved to Paris to live among artists, becoming one herself. She studied to be an actress at the *Comédie Francaise*, and to be an artist at the *Academie Julian*. In Paris she was part of a circle of artists who included Francis Picabia, Man Ray, Joseph Stella, among others. A follower of Theosophy and of its main proponent Krishnamurti, she settled near Ojai, California to be near his center.

I saw her speak when she was a spry 101. She maintained both the beatific composer of a lifelong adherent to eastern philosophy as well as a playful glint in her eye. When asked the secret of her long life, she famously answered, "I owe it all to art books, chocolates and young men."

The exhibition at LA Louver features 38 drawings and 13 prints (some hand-tinted, some lithographs) from as early as 1917 until 1994, as well as many of Wood's celebrated ceramic creations.



Installation view of Beatrice Wood: Drawings, Prints, Ceramics. Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice CA. PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE, COURTESY OF LA LOUVER



Playwrights (1926) by Beatrice Wood COURTESY OF LA LOUVER, VENICE, CA.

The prints are personal, internal, in some ways a private journal of people, events, and feelings. Often delicate renderings of men and women, they are rarely radical or bold but at moments conjure allusions to some of her contemporaries such as Ferdinand Leger and Sonia Delaunay.

Wood's ceramics, by contrast, are solid, imposing, statement pieces. Wood is justly celebrated for the in-glaze luster of her pieces produced in a single glaze firing. The pottery beguiles and are singular works of art. The gold luster pieces seem like timeless artifacts from an ancient culture.

At the LA Louver exhibition Beatrice Wood's gold luster pieces shimmer in the light, much like the presence of Wood herself.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomteicholz/2022/10/24/the-timeless-shimmer-of-beatrice-wood/?sh=14d14cf76b49>