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VENICE, CALIFORNIA
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BEATRICE WOOD

DRAWINGS, PRINTS, CERAMICS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2022

21 September - 29 October 2022

Opening Reception
Wednesday, 21 September 2022
6 - 8 p.m.



Beatrice Wood
Possession, 1925
colored pencil on paper
13 1/2 x 9 1/2 in.



Beatrice Wood, *Untitled [Head in Abstraction]*, 1996, pencil and colored pencil on paper, 10 1/4 x 13 1/4 in.

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present drawings, prints, and ceramics by Beatrice Wood from the collection of scholar and curator Francis M. Naumann. This selection of works, dating from 1917 to 1996, represents the breadth and variety of Wood's art and provides remarkable insight into her extraordinary life and creative process.

Celebrated as the "Mama of Dada," Beatrice Wood (1893–1998) was an iconoclastic figure. A creative polymath, Wood was involved in a range of artistic pursuits, particularly acting, drawing, and sculpting. She sat in on life-drawing classes at the famed Académie Julian in Paris when she was only 17-years old, her only formal artistic training. When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, she returned to the United States where she would pursue a career as an actress for the French Repertory Company in New York.

It was during these years in New York that Wood maintained notable and impactful relationships with Marcel Duchamp and Henri-Pierre Roché, a French government envoy living in New York during the war. Through them she was introduced to the collectors Louise and Walter Arensberg, whose Upper West Side apartment is known to have been the historical nexus of New York Dada. These connections are memorialized in Wood's drawings and works on paper which depict situations and people drawn from the artist's memory. This exhibition offers a unique opportunity to understand Wood, in full relief, through her drawings and the prints made from her drawings, many of which exist now only in the form of these reproductions.

Wood's draftsmanship is best described in three phases: (I) Dada: drawings made in New York from 1915 through 1920; (II) Art Deco: drawings and prints made from 1926 through the mid-1930s, produced while living in Los Angeles; and (III) Late Drawings: prompted by the discovery and display of her drawings in the mid-1970s. These periods are all accounted for among the 38 drawings and 13 prints of this exhibition and witness the relational, emotional, and spiritual flows of Wood's life. The lithograph *Blindman's Ball* (1917) for instance, documents Wood's editorial involvement with *The Blindman*, an independent publication created in collaboration with Duchamp and Roché. Wood's design was used as the poster announcing the ball held in honor of the second, and what would be final, printing of the magazine.



Beatrice Wood
Gold Luster Chalice, 1980
glazed earthenware
12 1/2 x 9 1/4 in.

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Throughout the 1920s, Wood lived a somewhat peripatetic life as she traveled between the east and west coasts of the United States, merging completely and seemingly effortlessly with influential avant-garde circles wherever she went. Works such as *Possession* (1925) and *Embracing Couple* (1932) demonstrate the deep romantic longing Wood experienced in and out of partnerships, especially during her years of early adulthood. Later drawings, such as *Untitled [Vision Beyond]* (1994), depicting a glowing and interconnected cosmos, and *Untitled [Head in Abstraction]* (1996), in which the figure's identity is merged and indiscernible from its fractured environment, express more explicitly Wood's spiritual nature, which was strongly influenced by eastern philosophy and religion. Today, her drawings can be found in the collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, National Portrait Gallery, American Museum of Ceramic Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Whitney Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art In New York, as well as in many other museums across the United States.

It wasn't until 1933 when Wood was 40-years old that she began experimenting with ceramics, a facet of her artistic practice that would become nearly all-consuming. 10 of these sculptural works are displayed here among her prints and drawings; with subjects ranging from ornamental kitchenware to figurative ceramic sculptures. A virtuosa of the craft, Wood gained increasing acclaim for these creations and her characteristic glazing technique, which yielded a highly unique luster. This recognition included several retrospective exhibitions, the most momentous and comprehensive of these opened at the American Craft Museum in New York and concluded at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1998. Today, ceramics by Beatrice Wood belong to the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Philadelphia Museum of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Brooklyn Museum, Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art In New York, and many others.

Wood is not only a figure central to the international Dada scene of her time and an institutionally recognized artist, she holds a unique position in the history of Southern California. From her birth in San Francisco in 1893 and her involvement with creative spheres in Los Angeles in the 1920s, to electing Ojai as her permanent home in 1948 and her passing there in 1998 at the incredible age of 105, Wood is rightly characterized as a "California artist."

The 100-page catalogue published on the occasion of this exhibition includes a preface by Founding Director of L.A. Louver Peter Goulds and two texts by Naumann: one describing Wood's life as expressed through her drawings, prints and diary entries, and the other an account of Wood as a ceramic artist, elucidating her influences and trajectory in relation to the medium. This publication mirrors the exhibition in its demonstration of Naumann's close friendship with the artist and profound knowledge of Wood's life and work.

Concurrent second floor gallery exhibitions:

New Work: Rebecca Campbell, Yvette Gellis, Iva Gueorguieva, Heather Gwen Martin, Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin, and Alison Saar

Wesley Kimler: Afghan Battle Kites