BAMPFA Premieres Groundbreaking Exhibition
Organized by Mead Art Museum at Amherst College that Examines the Role of Science in Mid-Century Art

On View at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive: November 7, 2018–March 3, 2019
On View at Mead Art Museum at Amherst College: March 28–June 2, 2019

*Dimensionism* Illuminates Untold Story of “Scientific Revolution” Among Leading European and American Artists

*(Berkeley, CA) August 21, 2018—*This fall, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) presents the premiere of a nationally touring exhibition that explores the influence of scientific discovery on some of the twentieth century’s most celebrated artists. Organized by the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, *Dimensionism: Modern Art in the Age of Einstein* is the first exhibition to highlight the untold story of the “Dimensionist Manifesto”—a proclamation authored by Hungarian poet Charles Sirató in 1936 and endorsed by such artistic luminaries as Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Joan Miró, László Moholy-Nagy, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and others—which called for an artistic response to the era’s groundbreaking scientific discoveries. Featuring nearly seventy artworks by the Manifesto’s signatories and their contemporaries, the exhibition illuminates remarkable connections between the scientific and artistic revolutions that shaped the twentieth century.

*Dimensionism* features new scholarship on the influence of science on European and American artists of the 1930s, who were active at a time when mass media was exposing the general public to radical new developments in scientific theory. Inspired by new conceptions of time and space engendered by physics, mathematics, astronomy, and microbiology, an emerging avant-garde movement sought to expand the “dimensionality” of modern art. These artists engaged with scientific concepts to advance bold new forms of creative expression, from the fourth dimension of space-time embodied by Calder’s free-moving mobiles to new perceptions of the cosmos evoked by Noguchi’s lunar landscapes.
The exhibition illuminates creative currents that connected the Dimensionists to their artistic contemporaries in the pre- and postwar eras, many of whom were inspired by the same scientific themes that were championed by the Dimensionist movement. Some of the group’s earliest ventures included direct engagement with scientists, such as the artist László Moholy-Nagy’s correspondence with Albert Einstein. Similarly, Naum Gabo, Barbara Hepworth, and Henry Moore knew the x-ray crystallographer J.D. Bernal and were influenced by his new scientific images, which share striking similarities with works such as Moore’s *Stringed Figure* (1938), a highlight of the exhibition. Even the critical reception of artwork of cubist painters like Pablo Picasso, was informed in part by the new physics of quantum theory.

The scientific theories of modern physics and astronomy in particular played an important role in the development of Dimensionism, inspiring the drive for a new type of kinetic art (like Alexander Calder’s mobiles) that embodied the new vision of a dynamic universe in which nothing was static. Just as importantly, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity posited a new type of curved space, confirmed by the total eclipse of 1919, which showed the “bending” of light around the sun. The image of the eclipse became symbolic of this historic moment that altered our perception of space and time and found itself represented in many artworks of this era, including on one of Duchamp’s kinetic “Rotoreliefs,” and artwork by Joseph Cornell.

Curated by Vanja Malloy, the Mead’s curator of American art, Dimensionism brings together paintings, sculptures, prints, and photographs from private and museum collections, along with poetry and other ephemera associated with the Dimensionist movement. More than 36 artists are represented in the exhibition, including many of the Manifesto’s original signatories as well as other prominent artists—Helen Lundeberg, Barbara Hepworth, Man Ray, Isamu Noguchi, Wolfgang Paalen, Pablo Picasso, Yves Tanguy, and many others—who drew inspiration from science.

“This unprecedented exhibition invites visitors to reconsider work by some of the most important artists of the twentieth century in a fresh historical framework that emphasizes their engagement with the world of science—a powerful influence on the trajectory of modern art that has been largely overlooked until now,” said Malloy. “By illuminating this forgotten history, Dimensionism reveals that major swaths of avant-garde art can never fully be understood unless contextualized within the social and scientific upheavals that shaped them.”

An illustrated 328-page exhibition catalog, edited by Malloy, provides the first in-depth scholarship on the Dimensionist Manifesto and the relationship between modern art and science more generally. The catalog includes new essays by Malloy; Oliver A. I. Botar from the University of Manitoba; Linda Dalrymple Henderson from the University of Texas at Austin; and Gavin Parkinson from the Courtauld Institute of Art. Published and distributed by the MIT Press, the catalog is available to purchase at the Mead Art Museum and BAMPFA, and online at https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/dimensionism.

“We are delighted to partner with our friends at the Mead in premiering their exceptional exhibition here in Berkeley, where our visitors will have the opportunity to rediscover an important passage of modern art history with a truly outstanding selection of artwork—including multiple works from our own collection,” said BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder, who is overseeing the
BAMPFA presentation of **Dimensionism**. “As the visual arts center for one of America’s leading research universities, BAMPFA is an ideal venue to launch an exhibition that celebrates the spirit of scholarly and creative exchange between the worlds of art and science.”

**Support**

**Dimensionism: Modern Art in the Age of Einstein** is organized by the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College and curated by Vanja Malloy, curator of American art. The exhibition is made possible with the generous support of Henry Luce Foundation, the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Hall and Kate Peterson Fund, the David W. Mesker ’53 Fund, and the Wise Fund for Fine Arts. The BAMPFA presentation is organized by Lawrence Rinder, director and chief curator, with Matthew Coleman, curatorial assistant, and made possible with lead support from Nion McEvoy and Leslie Berriman and major support from Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau and Orton Development, Inc.

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1) Helen Lundeberg: *Microcosm and Macrocosm*, 1937; oil on Masonite; 37 x 19 1/2 inches (94 x 49.5 cm); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. (M.2003.50). © The Feitelson / Lundeberg Art Foundation. Digital Image © 2018 Museum Associates / LACMA. Licensed by Art Resource, NY.


**BAMPFA Visitor Information**

Address

2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

Hours

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

$13 general admission

$11 non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+

FREE BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff; 18 & under; one adult per child 13 & under
Information
bampfa.org
(510) 642-0808

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Mead Art Museum Visitor Information
Address
41 Quadrangle Drive, Amherst College
Amherst, Ma., 01002

Academic Year Hours
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 9 a.m. to Midnight
Fridays, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Always FREE and open to all

Information
Amherst.edu/mead
(413) 542-2335

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About BAMPFA
An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and up to twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution’s collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.

About The Mead Art Museum
Named for its founder, William Rutherford Mead (an 1867 graduate of Amherst College and a partner in the storied architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White), the Mead holds the art collection of Amherst College, celebrated for its American and European paintings, Mexican ceramics, Tibetan scroll paintings, English paneled room, ancient Assyrian carvings, Russian avant-garde art, West African sculpture, and Japanese prints.

The Mead is situated in the vibrant Five Colleges academic community of western Massachusetts, and serves as a laboratory for interdisciplinary research and innovative teaching involving original works of art. Eight galleries feature regularly changing exhibitions and installations spanning a wide range of historical periods and artistic media.