

Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde

Barbican Art Gallery, UK

10 October 2018 – 27 January 2019

Media View, Tuesday 9 October, 10am – 2pm

#ModernCouples @barbicancentre

Modern Couples is organised by Centre Pompidou-Metz in collaboration with Barbican Centre, London

It is supported by Lead Sponsor Bupa Global and tp bennett

With additional support from the Office for Cultural and Scientific Affairs of the Embassy of Spain in London.

Barbican Art Gallery's pioneering autumn exhibition *Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde* showcases the creative output of over 40 artist couples active in the first half of the 20th century. Drawing on loans from private and public collections worldwide, this major interdisciplinary show features the work of painters, sculptors, photographers, architects, designers, writers, musicians and performers, shown alongside personal photographs, love letters, gifts and rare archival material. Among the highlights are legendary duos such as: **Jean Arp** and **Sophie Taeuber-Arp**; **Camille Claudel** and **Auguste Rodin**; **Barbara Hepworth** and **Ben Nicholson**; **Frida Kahlo** and **Diego Rivera**; **Dora Maar** and **Pablo Picasso**; **Lee Miller** and **Man Ray**; **Varvara Stepanova** and **Alexander Rodchenko**; **Virginia Woolf** and **Vita Sackville-West**; as well as lesser known pairings such as **Emilie Flöge** and **Gustav Klimt**, **Federico García Lorca** and **Salvador Dalí**, **Romaine Brooks** and **Natalie Clifford-Barney** and **Lavinia Schulz** and **Walter Holdt**.

Opening on 10 October, *Modern Couples* is part of the Barbican Centre's **The Art of Change**, a yearlong season that explores the relationship between art, society and politics. By focusing on intimate relationships in all their forms – obsessional, conventional, mythic, platonic, fleeting, life-long – it also reveals the way in which creative individuals came together, transgressing the constraints of their time, reshaping art, redefining gender stereotypes and forging new ways of living and loving. Importantly, the exhibition also challenges the idea that the history of art was a singular line of solitary, predominantly male geniuses.

Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican, said: *"This is such an extraordinary project as it brings together many of the most exciting figures of the avant-garde period, while setting up fascinating juxtapositions and taking visitors on a journey of discovery. Its new take on modern art history, focusing on collaboration and mutual influence in intimate relationships, could not be timelier. The show offers visitors a deeply personal and revealing insight into the transformative impact artists' had on each other. Ultimately it is an exhibition about modern art and modern love."*

Carefully choreographed as a journey through a series of rooms dedicated to different couples, *Modern Couples* offers visitors a chance to immerse themselves in a diverse range of artistic collaborations. Each room sheds light on the artists' personal and creative encounters, bringing to life a particular moment in their work or highlighting a shared creative interest. *Modern Couples* also includes two displays focusing on larger communities of artists: one devoted to Surrealism's 'Chance Encounter' and the other to radical Lesbian artists of the Parisian Left Bank during the 1920s and 30s.

Legendary couple **Frida Kahlo** and **Diego Rivera**'s well-documented relationship was notoriously tumultuous and emotionally charged. The inclusion of Kahlo's powerful and rarely seen painting *The Wounded Deer* (1946) alludes both to the physical trauma she endured following an unsuccessful operation and to the fragility of her relationship with Diego as well as more broadly encapsulating the pain that goes with love.

The exhibition also reveals lesser-known aspects of famous artists' works, emphasising their influences, inspirations and collaborations. **Gustav Klimt**'s lifelong soul mate **Emilie Flöge**, for instance, was more than just a muse. A talented fashion designer who ran her own couture house, the *Schwester Flöge* (1904–1938) in Vienna, she was also Klimt's sparring partner. Both shared a euphoric sense of a new world of art outside the confines of academic tradition and a love of textiles and ornamentation, which fed into both their practices. The exhibition features Klimt's

photographs of Flöge modelling her reform dresses, perhaps one of the earliest examples of 'artist as fashion photographer', as well as intimate letters between them.

Also at the intersection of design and art, visitors are able to explore the Omega workshop (1913–1919) created by **Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry** and **Duncan Grant** and the multi-disciplinary symphony of colour called 'Simultaneism' developed in tandem by **Sonia Delaunay** and **Robert Delaunay**; as well as **Aino Aalto** and **Alvar Aalto's** Artek, a design company and showroom they opened in Helsinki in 1935. Evoking the shop design of the time, a selection of their iconic pieces of furniture and glass are on show. **Eileen Gray** and **Jean Badovici's** modernist villa E1027 in the south of France (1926-29) is also featured with original furniture pieces.

Photography is brought to life through the collaborations of legendary figures including **Claude Cahun** and **Marcel Moore**; **Lucia Moholy** and **László Moholy-Nagy's** photographic portrayal of the Bauhaus; **Lee Miller** and **Man Ray's** shared experiments in the darkroom and **Edward Weston's** reciprocally inspirational relationships with both **Margrethe Mather** and **Tina Modotti**.

Little known partnerships such as the photographic trio **PaJaMa** (forged by **Paul Cadmus, Jared French** and **Margaret French**) are one of the discoveries in the exhibition. Their work is shown in close dialogue with work of photographer **George Platt Lynes**, forming another American trio with writer **Glenway Wescott** and publisher **Monroe Wheeler**. Their potent images, often taken of one another, highlight the emergence of a graphic homoeroticism in the American interwar period.

Literature also plays a strong part in *Modern Couples*. There is a focus on the leading Modernist writer **Virginia Woolf** and her landmark text *Orlando: A Biography*, 1928, a celebration of her transformative relationship with **Vita Sackville-West**. Woolf's rarely seen, original manuscript is on display. *Modern Couples* also features a selection of 35 first edition books published with her husband **Leonard Woolf** under the imprint of *The Hogarth Press*. The exhibition also includes the work of political activist **Nancy Cunard** alongside her partner and muse, the poet and jazz musician **Henry Crowder**. She was the founder of the influential *Hours Press* in the 1920s, publishing Samuel Beckett for the first time. Additionally, *Modern Couples* presents an array of beautifully crafted books of love poems that came out of iconic Surrealist relationships and collaborations, as well as **Alexander Rodchenko's** radical and bold graphic design for the Russian review periodicals *Lef* and *Novy Lef*.

At the same time as *Orlando* was published, **Natalie Clifford Barney** was holding Friday evening salons in Paris, principally for women attracted to women. Coined *The Temple de l'Amitie* (The Temple of Friendship), it became a space for female desire and artistic innovation. In a display dedicated to the Temple and to the wider community of lesbian and bisexual artists and writers, works by **Romaine Brooks**, Barney's partner, are included such as her rarely seen portrait of Luisa Casati (1920) as well as her nude photographs of her once lover **Ida Rubinstein**. This section also includes the emblematic nude double portrait of women lovers, *Les Deux Amies* (1923) by **Tamara de Lempicka**.

A special display dedicated to the *Chance Encounter* in Surrealism brings together the extraordinarily creative and intimate relationships formed by **André Breton** and **Jacqueline Lamba, Nusch** and **Paul Éluard, Toyen** and **Styrsky, Unica Zürn** and **Hans Bellmer** and many more.

Other highlights include original love letters between **Auguste Rodin** and **Camille Claudel**; **Leonora Carrington's** stunning *Portrait of Max Ernst* (1937) which is a coded double portrait with Carrington appearing as her 'alter-ego' the 'Bride of the Wind'; **Gerda Wegener's** painting of **Lili Elbe**, the artist couple that inspired the book and film *The Danish Girl*; two little seen matching self-portraits by **Varvara Stepanova** and **Alexander Rodchenko**; as well as a section devoted to **Hannah Höch** and **Raoul Hausmann's** masterful use of the photomontage as a political tool; **Gabriele Münter** and **Wassily Kandinsky**; **Marianne von Werefkin** and **Alexej von Jawlensky** works from their days together in their self-styled artist colony at Murnau; and rarely seen drawings, original correspondence and photographs exchanged between **Federico García Lorca** and **Salvador Dalí**.

Artist Couples include:

Aino and Alvar Aalto; **Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry**; Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; **Lilya Brik and Vladimir Mayakovsky**; Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore; **Benedetta and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti**; Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst; **Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin**; Nancy Cunard and Henry Crowder; **Sonia Delaunay and Robert Delaunay**; Lili Elbe and Gerda Wegener; **Emilie Flöge and Gustav Klimt**; Federico García Lorca and Salvador Dalí; **Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov**; Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici; **Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson**; Hannah Höch and Til Brugman; **Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann**; Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera; **Dora Maar and Pablo Picasso**; Alma Mahler and Oskar Kokoschka; **Alma Mahler and Gustav Mahler**; Maria Martins and Marcel Duchamp; **Margrethe Mather and Edward Weston**; Lee Miller and Man Ray; **Lee Miller and Roland Penrose**; Tina Modotti and Edward Weston; **Lucia Moholy and László Moholy-Nagy**; Gabriele Münter and Wassily Kandinsky; **Winifred Nicholson and Ben Nicholson**; Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz; **PaJaMa: Paul Cadmus, Jared French, and Margaret French**; George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler and Glenway Wescott; **Lavinia Schultz and Walter Holdt**; Varvara Stepanova and Alexander Rodchenko; **Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp**; Toyen and Jindřich Štyrský; **Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky**; Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West; **Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf**; and Unica Zürn and Hans Bellmer

Artist Couples in *Chance Encounter*:

Eileen Agar and Joseph Bard; **Eileen Agar and Paul Nash**; Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy; **Leonor Fini and André Pieyre de Mandiargues**; Gala and Salvador Dalí; **Gala, Paul Éluard and Max Ernst**; Valentine Hugo and André Breton; **Jacqueline Lamba and André Breton**; Kiki de Montparnasse and Man Ray; **Nadja and André Breton**; Nusch and Paul Éluard; **Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff**; Valentine Penrose and Alice Rahon; **Valentine Penrose and Roland Penrose**; and Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst.

Artist couples in a room dedicated to *Temple de l’Amitié* (The Temple of Friendship):

Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood; **Natalie Clifford-Barney and Romaine Brooks**; Natalie Clifford Barney and Rémy de Gourmont; **Natalie Clifford-Barney and Liane de Pougy**; Natalie Clifford Barney and Renée Vivien; **Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier**; Luisa Casati; **Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge**; Tamara de Lempicka; **Ida Rubinstein**; and Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Press Information

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Full press pack available online from the Barbican Newsroom:

Links to all documents can be found in the ‘Downloads’ box on the top right-hand side of the page from www.barbican.org.uk/moderncouplesnews

Public Information

Barbican Art Gallery and Gallery Shop, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, EC2Y 8DS, London

0845 120 7550 www.barbican.org.uk/moderncouples

Follow updates on the exhibition via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

#ModernCouples and @barbicancentre.

Opening Hours

Saturday to Wednesday, 10am – 6pm; Thursday & Friday, 10am – 9pm

Bank Holiday Mondays: 12noon – 6pm, Bank Holiday Fridays: 12noon – 9pm

Exhibition closed 24 –26 December 2018; New Year’s Day opening 1 January 2019: 12noon – 6pm

Ticket Prices:

Standard: £16 **Membership Plus:** Unlimited free entry + guest **Membership:** Unlimited free entry

Corporate Membership: Unlimited free entry + guest **Young Barbican** (14–25s): £5 (no booking fee)

Concessions: £12 **Students/14-17:** £10 **Art Fund Members:** £12 **Under 14s:** Free

IMPORTANT NOTES

Modern Couples includes some works of an adult nature. Parental guidance advised, and children 14 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Large bags, rucksacks and luggage are not permitted in the gallery. All bags are subject to search. Photography is not permitted. Food and drink are not permitted.

Exhibition

Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-Garde is at Barbican Art Gallery from 10 October 2018 to 27 January 2019. The exhibition is organised by **Centre Pompidou-Metz** in collaboration with Barbican Centre, London. It is curated by **Emma Lavigne**, Director Centre Pompidou-Metz; **Jane Alison**, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican; **Coralie Malissard**, Assistant Curator, Barbican; **Elia Biezunski**, Associate Curator, Centre Pompidou-Metz; and **Cloé Pitiot**, Design Curator, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. The exhibition at Barbican Art Gallery is designed by **Casper Mueller Kneer Architects** with graphic design by **APFEL (A Practise for Everyday Life)**. The exhibition is supported by Lead Sponsor Bupa Global and tp bennett. With additional support from the Office for Cultural and Scientific Affairs of the Embassy of Spain in London.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by Prestel and features beautifully reproduced works by all the artists in the exhibition. Edited by Barbican Head of Visual Arts Jane Alison and Assistant Curator Coralie Malissard. It includes contributions from over 40 international writers. 352 pages with 300 images. Hardcover. Price: £45 ISBN: 978-3-7913-5841-3

Events

A rich programme of talks and events accompanies the exhibition.

www.barbican.org.uk/moderncouples

Hotel partner Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London

Special exhibition hotel experience includes exhibition tickets for *Modern Couples* and an overnight stay in a luxurious room or suite at Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London.

Creative Learning

Schools Offer

A downloadable teacher's resource, highlighting key themes and questions raised by the exhibition, is available to support school visits. A special school group rate alongside free exhibition tours, suitable for secondary school groups is £3 per student (Secondary and sixth form, up to age 19) and applies to all school groups of 10 or more. Children under 14 are free. To ensure a free exhibition tour as part of the visit, bookings must be made at least two weeks in advance.

Please contact the school groups booking line: Tel: 020 7382 7211 (Mon–Fri 10am–5pm)

Email: groups@barbican.org.uk

Young Barbican

In addition to our regular discounted access for Young Barbican members, Barbican will host special views for Young Barbican members, offering young people the opportunity to visit the exhibition and see the works interpreted by their peers. The Young Barbican Guides programme invites young people aged 14-25 to respond creatively to our exhibitions and give creative tours to other young people and the wider public. The Young Barbican membership is free and gives young people aged 14-25 discounted access to unmissable art and entertainment as well as exclusive events and creative opportunities. www.barbican.org.uk/join-support/young-barbican

Barbican Art Box

The Barbican's flagship schools programme **Barbican Box**, takes *Modern Couples* as its inspiration for the 2018/19 academic year. A cross-art form Box exploring key themes of collaboration, creative experimentation and play, will be delivered in schools from autumn 2018. Students and teachers will visit *Modern Couples* and explore collaboration through a series of artist-led workshops. The Box will draw inspiration from contemporary collectives and duos, fusing art, text

and image and enabling participants to create new work in response to the exhibition. The Barbican Box programme works with over 700 school and college students from across east London annually. <https://www.barbican.org.uk/education/schools/barbican-box-secondary>

Barbican Art Gallery Shop

In addition to the official exhibition catalogue the Gallery Shop will also feature a wide selection of the featured artists' books and other related titles plus prints, stationery, postcards, gifts and more. The best of the Barbican Shop ranges can be found online at www.barbican.org.uk/shop

The Art of Change at the Barbican 2018

The Art of Change presents bold artistic responses to vital global issues including feminism, climate change and human rights, while providing a platform for voices currently underrepresented in the arts. The season includes world-class music, theatre, dance, film, visual arts and learning and runs throughout 2018. barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/the-art-of-change

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](http://www.barbican.org.uk) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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