

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DAVIS MUSEUM ACQUIRES COLLECTION OF MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHS
AND PHOTOGRAMS BY MEXICAN-AMERICAN ARTIST ROSA ROLANDA**



WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis Museum at Wellesley College has acquired a collection of 40 photographs including 14 unique photograms by Rosa Rolanda (1895-1970), an American-born photographer, painter, and dancer (she is also known by her married name, Rosa Covarrubias). Highlights of the collection include semi-abstract photographs of the new Rockefeller Center from her *Skyscraper* series, and still life compositions inspired by the work of Edward Weston. In addition, the collection includes Surrealist abstract compositions using photograms that operate as self-portraits. Works from the acquisition will be on view in an upcoming major exhibition called *Art__Latin__America*, which opens in February 2019 at the Davis Museum.

“Rosa Rolanda was a fascinating cultural figure of wide-ranging talents, and an ingenious and experimental artist who seemed to thrive in the eye of the modernist storm,” says Lisa Fischman, Ruth Gordon Shapiro ’37 Director of the Davis Museum. “Bringing her work into the Davis holdings will create endless opportunities for curatorial work and new scholarship, plus will add great strength to our existing collection of female Surrealists.”

In 1923, Rolanda met Surrealist photographer Man Ray in Paris and he often took her portrait. She learned then of his avant-garde experiments with photography, particularly the photogram, a photographic print made by placing objects in direct contact with the negative and exposing the arrangement to light, without the use of a camera.

In her own photograms, *Drawing Photogram* and *Self-Portrait Photogram*, Rolanda combined self-portrait drawings with objects such as glasses, beakers, and silverware, cut sea shells, a glass goblet, a silver brooch from Taxco, a jade deer from China, and a plastic ruler. Rolanda’s photograms were

included in the groundbreaking exhibition [*In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*](#), which opened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2012.

Rolanda met Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias in New York in 1925 while she was performing as a well-known modernist dancer. She traveled with him to Mexico City in 1926, where she was photographed by Edward Weston. He soon became another strong influence on her work. Rolanda gave up her dance career in 1929, and married Covarrubias in 1930. The couple traveled soon thereafter to Bali, where they collaborated on the book *Island of Bali*, published in 1937, with photographs taken by Rolanda.

Rolanda continued as a prominent figure in the Mexican art world even after her divorce from Covarrubias: at her home in the Tizapán district of Mexico City she hosted many famous figures from the worlds of art and literature, including her friends Nelson Rockefeller, writer Anita Loos, and painters Rufino Tamayo and Frida Kahlo.

The upcoming exhibition *Art__Latin__America*, draws from the extensive collection of Latin American and Latino/a art housed at the Davis Museum, and is curated by James Oles, senior lecturer in Wellesley's Art Department and adjunct curator of Latin American art at the Davis Museum. The exhibition will include over 150 works by 100 artists from Latin America, Europe, and the United States.

Origins of the Collection

The Rosa Rolanda collection was acquired from Wellesley College alumna Adriana Williams '55, who was a close friend of the artist. As the granddaughter of former Mexican president Plutarco Elias Calles, Williams met many prominent figures in the Mexican art world in her youth, including Rolanda. Williams, who lives in San Francisco, is a widely-published author, and her books include *Rosa Covarrubias: An American Who Loved Mexico* (2007) and the definitive biography of Miguel Covarrubias, published by the University of Texas Press in 1994.

“The collection of Rosa Rolanda's remarkable photographs and photograms acquired by the Davis Museum at Wellesley College is a unique and important example of photographic abstract modernism of the '20s and '30s,” said Williams. “In acknowledging her photographic virtuosity, Rosa's legacy is assured for future generations to enjoy.”

ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical, and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas, and fosters involvement with

the arts both within the College and the larger community.

ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming—classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2,400 undergraduates from 49 states and 58 countries.

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Image Credit:

Rosa Rolanda, *Self-Portrait Photogram*, late 1920s or early 1930s

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High-resolution images and interviews available upon request