

# The Museum of Modern Art

## ***INVENTING THE MODERN: UNTOLD STORIES OF THE WOMEN WHO SHAPED THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO BE PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER 2024***

### **Essays by Distinguished Contemporary Women Celebrate the Trailblazers Who Founded and Impacted the Museum in Its Early Decades**

**NEW YORK, NY, April 24, 2024** – The Museum of Modern Art today announced the forthcoming publication of *Inventing the Modern: Untold Stories of the Women Who Shaped The Museum of Modern Art*, a revelatory account of the Museum’s earliest years told through newly commissioned profiles of 14 women who had a decisive impact on the formation and development of the institution. *Inventing the Modern* comprises illuminating new essays on the women who, as founders, curators, patrons, and directors of various departments, made enduring contributions to MoMA during its early decades (especially between 1929 and 1945), creating new models for how to envision, establish, and operate a museum in an era when the field of modern art was uncharted territory.

The publication, which will be available in September 2024, is edited by Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, and Romy Silver-Kohn, researcher in the Museum’s Department of Painting and Sculpture.

“With chapters devoted to The Museum of Modern Art’s pioneering founders Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan, and 11 other indispensable figures, *Inventing the Modern* brings to light the women who were instrumental to MoMA’s early success, despite the many barriers they faced,” said Ann Temkin. “These women invented fields and defined roles within the Museum during its critical formative years. Their stories are now being told—in many cases, for the first time—and as a result our understanding of the Museum’s history is decisively transformed.”

Among those featured are:

- curator Dorothy Miller (in an essay by journalist and biographer Mary Gabriel), who introduced an exhibition program focused on contemporary American artists and dramatically elevated awareness of American art at home and abroad
- Iris Barry (profiled by film critic Farran Smith Nehme), who established MoMA’s Film Library (later the Department of Film) and championed the recognition of film as an art form
- Sarah Newmeyer (profiled by memoirist and novelist Sloane Crosley), the Museum’s first publicist, who created innovative press and marketing campaigns that captured the public’s imagination

- art historian, editor, translator, and teacher Margaret Scolari Barr (in an essay by Lanka Tattersall, Laurenz Foundation Curator in MoMA's Department of Drawings and Prints), who, though never an employee of the Museum, was a key advisor to her husband, Alfred H. Barr Jr., MoMA's founding director
- Dorothy Dudley (in an essay by celebrated art critic Roberta Smith), the Museum's first full-time, professionally trained registrar and the driving force behind a decade-long campaign against outdated US customs laws that limited the movement of modern art across international borders
- Olga Hirsh Guggenheim (profiled by Ann Temkin), whose uniquely generous donations supported important Museum acquisitions for decades, including works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Claude Monet, among other artists

The Museum's three founders are profiled separately, with essays by institutional leader and former Spelman College president Mary Schmidt Campbell (writing on Abby Aldrich Rockefeller), novelist Kate Walbert (writing on Lillie P. Bliss), and historian Nell Irvin Painter (writing on Mary Quinn Sullivan). In addition to the 14 new essays, the book features a foreword by actress and playwright Anna Deavere Smith.

"We are pleased to share the stories of these exceptional women who, by turning their ideas into action, were essential to the invention of The Museum of Modern Art," said Romy Silver-Kohn. "These accounts not only deepen our knowledge of the Museum's history, but illuminate the crucial role women played in shaping the history of art and culture in the 20th century."

In parallel with the release of *Inventing the Modern*, The Museum of Modern Art will present an exhibition, opening in November 2024, focusing on Lillie P. Bliss and her unparalleled collection, which she gifted to the Museum in her will. This celebration of Bliss's generosity will coincide with the ninetieth anniversary of MoMA's 1934 exhibition of her bequest, which effectively inaugurated the Museum's collection.

*Inventing the Modern* is published in hardcover by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and will be available at MoMA stores and online at [store.moma.org](https://store.moma.org). It is distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada and through Thames & Hudson in the rest of the world.

### **Inventing the Modern: Untold Stories of the Women Who Shaped The Museum of Modern Art**

Edited by Ann Temkin and Romy Silver-Kohn. Foreword by Anna Deavere Smith. Essays by Mary Schmidt Campbell, Sloane Crosley, Mary Gabriel, Jennifer Gray, Juliet Kinchin, Farran Smith Nehme, Nell Irvin Painter, Romy Silver-Kohn, Roberta Smith, Lanka Tattersall, Ann Temkin, Anne Umland, Kate Walbert, and Brenda Wineapple

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