

## THE COUNCIL OF LOVE

### Curator's Comment

Oskar Panizza (1853-1921) wrote his brilliant satire, *The Council of Love*, in 1893 as he was working as a psychiatrist and was active in the Munich Modern movement. The play was published the following year across the border in Zurich, but national boundaries did not prevent the Munich authorities trying the author on some 90 accounts of blasphemy (largely involving the Virgin Mary), having the book and the plates destroyed and sentencing Panizza to a year's imprisonment. He subsequently emigrated to Switzerland, now a full-time writer and publisher, only to be hounded once again by the authorities. After several years in Paris, he finally returned to Bavaria where he was declared incapable of managing his affairs, and placed in a mental asylum in 1905.

The Council of Love not only inspired the turn-of-the-century modern movement, the young Expressionists who went on to create Dada a generation later, and the post-war Surrealists, but also new admirers, directors and would-be censors in recent decades.

The Council of Love portfolio of engraving, Leonor Fini's tribute to the play and published in 1972 by Pierre and Genevieve Argillet, personified Fini's rejection of any attempts by individuals or institutions to control or limit her choices as a woman; something which should resonate deeply in today's world. It's interesting to note that each print is so delicately and elegantly rendered as though confronting and rejecting patriarchal misogynist oppression through feminine intelligence, strength, bodily agency, and beauty.

**Leonor Fini** (1907-1996) was by far, one of the most remarkable and iconoclastic women of the 20th century, Fini rejected the term "woman artist", and while on the periphery of Surrealism in Paris and intimate friends with many of its formal members, including Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, and others, she refused the role of "muse" that women often played in the eyes of their male counterparts.

Nevertheless, her work was included in every major Surrealist exhibition, including at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York, in 1936 and she was included in the **Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)** groundbreaking exhibition, *FANTASTIC ART, DADA, SURREALISM*, Dec. 19, 1936 - Jan. 17, 1937.

What I found most gratifying during the recent exhibition, *Salvador Dali and the Avant-Garde Circle of Pierre Argillet* (May-June 2024) is among the numerous sales which occurred, many of them were the etchings and engravings by Fini - an artist each buyer had never heard of before walking into the gallery! This speaks to the compelling power of both the artist's work and the admired manner in which she chose to live her life strictly on her own terms!