Nathaniel Stein

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

PO Box 7646

Philadelphia PA 19101-7646

[Nathaniel.Stein@philamuseum.org](mailto:Nathaniel.Stein@philamuseum.org)

Levy, Julien (1906-1981) Word count: 234

A New York-based art collector and gallerist, Julien Levy was an important advocate for photography as a modern art medium in the 1930s and 40s, and was instrumental in introducing the Surrealist movement to New York. Levy studied at Harvard University in the mid-1920s, where his teachers included future taste-makers A. Everett (“Chick”) Austin and Alfred Barr Jr. In 1926, Levy befriended Marcel Duchamp, with whom he traveled to Europe, circulating among the artistic avant-garde. Relationships with Man Ray, Mina Loy, Berenice Abbott, and others encouraged Levy’s activities as a collector and shaped the experimental spirit of the Julien Levy Gallery, opened in New York in 1931. In the decade before the foundation of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art, Levy mounted exhibitions addressing the history of the medium and arguing for the avant-garde photography of the moment, much as Alfred Stieglitz had done in the 1910s and 20s. More broadly, the Levy Gallery was an important – in some cases first – American venue for Surrealist-influenced artists including Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Salvador Dali, Arshile Gorky, Clarence John Laughlin, Pavel Tchelitchew, and Joseph Cornell.

**References and further reading:**

Ware, K. and Barberie, P. (2006) *Dreaming in Black and White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery*, Philadelphia/New Haven: Philadelphia Museum of Art with Yale UP.

Schaffner, I. and Jacobs, L. (eds.) (1998) *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery*, Cambridge, MA: MIT.