



ASSOCIAZIONE
GENESI

Press release, Milan April 23, 2025

Associazione Genesi
presents

Louise Nevelson

curated by **Ilaria Bernardi**

Bologna, Palazzo Fava
May 30-July 20, 2025

The Associazione Genesi, in collaboration with Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio in Bologna and Opera Laboratori as part of the cultural project Genus Bononiae, is pleased to announce a major exhibition on the work of Louise Nevelson (born Lija Isaakivna Berljavs'ka, Kiev, 1899 - New York, 1988), one of the first women artists to gain firm recognition in the art system of her time as early as the early 1940s, thanks to her large black, white, and gold monochrome sculptures made using assemblages of waste materials.

The exhibition, curated by Ilaria Bernardi, can be visited from May 30 to July 20, 2025, in the rooms on the piano nobile of Palazzo Fava, decorated by the cycle of frescoes that was commissioned in 1584 from Ludovico, Annibale, and Agostino Carracci by the building's then-owner Filippo Fava.

This is the first exhibition dedicated to Louise Nevelson in the city of Bologna. It also corresponds to the 120th anniversary of her move from Kiev, where she was born, to the United States, where she was reunited with her father, who, a few years before, had emigrated there to escape the persecution against the Jews that had spread in their country. The move overseas marked a turning point in the life of the very young Louise, as it was in the United States that she found her freedom as a woman and her success as an artist.

With this project, Associazione Genesi begins a series of monographic exhibitions dedicated to great, historicized artists, whose lives and/or work can be interpreted *ex-post* as anticipating social issues that have become urgent today. While Louise Nevelson's works made from assembled waste materials foreshadowed the theme of memory, it was in her personal life, in which she opposed the conventions traditionally imposed on women in her day, that she anticipated today's pivotal issue of the female condition.

Indeed, although she was married to Charles Nevelson and had a son, Louise Nevelson felt the role of wife and mother to be so limiting that in 1941 she divorced her husband to devote herself entirely to art. Thanks to her determination to be emancipated as both a woman and an artist she was able to see her works enter the collections of major American museums, including MoMA in New York, as early as the 1950s; in 1962 her work was on display in the U.S. Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, and in 1967 she was given her first major retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York, which was followed by numerous other exhibitions around the world that earned her the title of "Grande dame of contemporary sculpture."



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At the heart of the exhibition are the iconic large-scale sculptures in painted wood, among which examples from different sculptural cycles produced in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s stand out.

Developing across the five rooms on the main floor of Palazzo Fava, for the first time ever this exhibition divides Louise Nevelson's works into recurring thematic-structural types, the aim being to emphasize the lexicon on which her work is based and through which her activity as a whole can be interpreted.

On display in the first room, the **Sala Giasone**, are the **freestanding monumental sculptures in black-painted wood, most of which untitled**, like the large-scale *Senza titolo* (Untitled) from 1964. Akin to large cabinets they conceal a variety of objects inside.

This is followed by the second room, the **Sala Rubianesca**, where **several examples of the series of so-called black-painted doors are on display. Suspended from the wall, these works were made in 1976 by "attaching" parts of projecting objects, including chairs, the backs of chairs, and chair legs, to wooden doors.** Also on display in the same room is an untitled work, *Senza titolo*, 1959-60, that would appear to be a prodrome for this series of works.

The third room, the **Sala Enea**, hosts a **different typology of sculptures, again made of black-painted wood suspended from the wall, however, this time the objects are very flat as they are constituted by assemblages of typographical elements.** Like the freestanding *Sky Totem* (1973) that accompanies them, their titles are explicitly evocative of natural or artificial landscapes (see *Tropical Landscape*, 1975 and *City Series*, 1974), demonstrating the extent to which "forms" and the energies hidden in what is real were always the artist's creative driver.

After the first three rooms characterized by the so-called iconic black-painted sculptures, in the fourth room, the **Sala Albani**, visitors can see the close relationship between Louise Nevelson's sculptural work and the collages and assemblages that accompanied her throughout her life. **The collages and assemblages on the wall, of small to medium size, more or less projecting, and of different shades from black to ochre**, on display in the Sala Albani, reveal, much more than the sculptures, the artist's interest in unconventional materials (natural wood, cardboard, sandpaper, aluminum film) and her approach to the creative process, which the Italian art critic Carla Lonzi correctly referred to as "destruction-transfiguration" since it was based on the transformation of objects into Art.

The exhibition continues into the **Sala Cesi** where viewers will find a "revelation": **etchings from 1953, along with silkscreens from 1975, rarely known of or exhibited before now.** **In the same room, marking the passage to the final room, is a 1978 video-interview with Louise Nevelson**, taped on the occasion of the opening of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, in New York. The chapel was entirely designed by the artist to contain white-painted wood sculptures. As part of her poetics, these works mark the passage toward the fully-fledged alchemical transformation from the black of lead to the sparkle of gold.

Indeed, in the last room, the **Sala Carracci**, large-scale collages of painted wood suspended from the wall, and above all a large freestanding sculpture like *The Golden Pearl*, 1962, present the final results of this alchemical transformation of the material: on display are **the even rarer works in which gold takes the place of black to become a dominant color.**



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As **Germano Celant** wrote in the monograph he published in 1971, Louise Nevelson's work is both "feminine and feminist," in that, by focusing on herself, on how to be independent from men, she achieved self-affirmation in a male culture. In order to reincorporate the female experience into history, the artist **brought into sculpture what the woman excluded from history has preserved over the millennia: the magical, alchemical, ahistorical primitive relationship with uncontaminated nature**, as opposed to technological male rationalism. This explains why to make her sculptures Nevelson used primitive materials (like stone or wood) and incorporated myths, alchemical processes, and the ritual representations of ancient civilizations. **The transformation of material (the scraps she collected and assembled in her sculptures) into Art, evoked the hoped-for transformation of the woman into an independent being, something that could only be achieved via self-affirmation.**

"Louise Nevelson reproduces in her work a feminist analysis of gender inequality, creating art that is authentically female," remarks the curator of the exhibition **Ilaria Bernardi**.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a **publication** that will be the first in a series of monographs produced by Associazione Genesi, **edited by Ilaria Bernardi and published by Silvana Editoriale**, dedicated to historicized artists to whom the solo shows organized by the Associazione will be dedicated.

Besides the exhibition, another essential aspect of this event is the **educational activity** consisting of **guided tours and workshops, inclusive, participatory, and at the same time**, for children of all ages as well as adults.

Moreover, **volunteers from the Gruppo FAI Ponte tra culture di Bologna will also participate by welcoming visitors with stories and personal anecdotes having to do with the themes implicit in each of the exhibitions.** FAI Ponte tra culture is a project by FAI Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano aimed at favoring intercultural dialogue and the integration of foreign citizens through the historical, artistic, cultural, and environmental heritage.

To expand its educational tools, the Associazione Genesi has entrusted Hidonix with the development of an app, available for free download from mobile and tablet stores. The app will provide all the information about the exhibition, guided tours, workshops, as well as about the Association itself.

The exhibition, like all of exhibitions planned by Associazione Genesi for 2025, is under the **patronage** of the **Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, FAI Ponte tra culture, Fondazione Gariwo, and RFK Human Rights Italia.**

The main sponsors are **Eni and Intesa Sanpaolo.**

The exhibition in Bologna is also made possible thanks to the contribution of **Heritage and Fondazione Pirelli.**

For their collaboration we are also grateful to the Fondazione Marconi (Milan), in particular to Gió Marconi and Deborah d'Ippolito, and to the Louise Nevelson Foundation (New York), specifically to Maria Nevelson.



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EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Address:

Palazzo Fava, Via Manzoni, 2, Bologna

Dates:

May 30-July 20, 2025

Hours:

Tuesday-Sunday, 10 am – 7 pm

Last ticket sold at 6 pm

Closed on Mondays

Tickets: adult: € 10,00; with discount: € 15,00

For information about the exhibition:

Genus Bononiae – Musei della Città

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For information about and to reserve guided tours:

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Associazione Genesi, founded in 2020 at the behest of Letizia Moratti, is committed to the defense of human rights through contemporary art, with the aim of contributing to the creation of a more responsible and socially active citizenry.

To be able to do so, Associazione Genesi created Collezione Genesi, selecting artworks by artists from around the world and from different generations, which reflect on today's most urgent, complex, and at times dramatic cultural, environmental, social, and political issues.

In addition, since 2021 Associazione Genesi has organized contemporary art exhibitions on themes related to human rights (including Progetto Genesi, 2021-2024), hosted in major exhibition spaces both in Italy and abroad, such as the UN in Geneva, the Triennale in Milan, Villa Panza in Varese, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin.

Since 2025 Associazione Genesi has become a fully-fledged travelling museum of contemporary art featuring solo and group shows related to the most pressing social issues.

The Association is also a Founder—along with Università Cattolica, Mapei, WeBuild and Always Africa Association—of E4Impact Foundation for the development of entrepreneurship in Africa, in which Intesa Sanpaolo, ENI, Montello, Carvico, CONFAPI, Coldiretti, Filiera Italia and, as individual participants, Diana Bracco and Michele Carpinelli also take part.

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SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF LOUISE NEVELSON

Born in Pereiaslav, near Kiev, in 1899, Louise Nevelson migrated to the United States with her family in 1905, where they settled in Maine.

After moving to New York in 1920, she studied at the Art Students League.

In the 1930s, she worked as Diego Rivera's assistant, and later as an art teacher for the Works Progress Administration.

She had her first solo show in 1941 at the Nierendorf Gallery in New York.

In the early 1950s she travelled to Guatemala and Mexico to learn about Pre-Colombian art. After these trips she began creating her first wood sculptures.

Over the course of the following four decades, she became one of the most revolutionary artists in the United States, famous for her large-scale monochromatic wood sculptures consisting of multiple elements, often divided into grids of geometric compartments. Profoundly linked to the results of Cubism and Constructivism, her works incorporate unusual combinations of shapes and materials.

The legacy of this great American artist lives on in the activity of the Louise Nevelson Foundation, as well as in the museums and public spaces of the most important American cities; for instance, in New York a group of monumental steel sculptures is permanently located in what has come to be called the Louise Nevelson Plaza, in the city's Financial District.

Her works can also be found in the permanent collections of the major international museums, including the MoMA and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Tate in London, GNAM in Turin, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm.