

# QUEENS MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Queens Museum Presents *The Art of Rube Goldberg*  
*The first retrospective exhibition in more than 40 years highlights the phenomenal cultural influence of Rube Goldberg's artwork.*

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**Exhibition Dates: October 6, 2019 - February 9, 2020**  
Public Opening: October 6, 2019

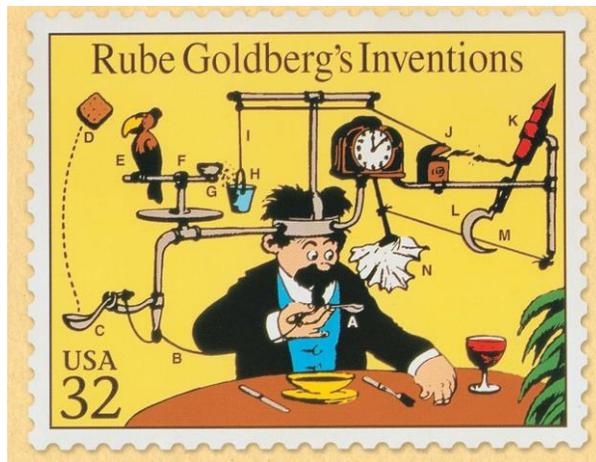


Image: Rube Goldberg, *Rube Goldberg Inventions United States Postal Service Stamp* (included on sheet of "Comic Classics" stamps), date unknown.

**Queens, NY (September 2019)** – *The Art of Rube Goldberg*, the first comprehensive retrospective exhibition since 1970, celebrates the groundbreaking artwork of one of the most influential cartoon illustrators of the 20th century. Reuben Garrett Lucius Goldberg (1883-1970) captured the imagination of the American public through his zany cartoons showing complicated ways to perform simple tasks. The exhibition chronicles all aspects of Goldberg's 72-year career, from his earliest published drawings and iconic invention drawings to his Pulitzer-winning political cartoons.

Bringing together approximately 100 never-before-exhibited works of art, drawings, video, and related ephemera, *The Art of Rube Goldberg* offers visitors an unprecedented opportunity to witness the development of Goldberg's artwork and trace his rise to prominence.

"It's especially fitting for the Queens Museum to present the work of Rube Goldberg," said Sally Tallant, Executive Director. "Rube Goldberg's generation saw an unprecedented and rapid explosion of new technology, and he was his moment's best satirist. It's productive for us to think about our time in relation to that one, and bring Goldberg's humor and humanity to the table while doing so. Playfulness and humor have always been an important element of visitors' experience at the Museum."

"New York City was where Rube Goldberg settled in 1907 as a young man, where he first received national acclaim as a syndicated cartoonist, and where he lived the rest of his life," said Larissa Harris, Curator. "We are so pleased to bring this important show not only to New York but to the museum where you can see all of New York at once. The Panorama of the City of New York—our gigantic miniature model of the city—may give visitors some context for the classic story of coming to the big city, as Rube did a century ago. We also think our multigenerational audience for the rest of the World's Fair collection will enjoy this deep dive into Goldberg's world."

*The Art of Rube Goldberg* begins with a look at Goldberg's innovative early work, including drawings that reveal the beginnings of his comic style, then follows his steady rise to fame as a nationally syndicated presence in the 1920s and 1930s. Highlights include one of Goldberg's earliest existing drawings, "The Old Violinist," from 1895; an original concept drawing of his characters Boob McNutt and Bertha from the 1920s; as well as original artwork for such daily and weekly comic strip series as *Foolish Questions*, *Mike and Ike—They Look Alike*, and *Boob McNutt*, all from the 1910s and 1920s. The influence of vaudeville and early film on Goldberg's comic imagination is examined and his satirical takes on fashion, sports, politics, gender roles, and other aspects of modern life are showcased and celebrated. Rare family photographs and early films provide period detail and essential context.

Prominently featured in *The Art of Rube Goldberg* is Goldberg's crowning artistic achievement: his invention drawings. Focusing on the artist's unique burlesque of our modern age of invention, this section chronicles how Goldberg's madcap contraptions caught the popular imagination and became—as he put it—"a symbol of man's capacity for exerting maximum effort to achieve minimal results," while making him a cultural icon. The exhibition concludes with a vivid survey of Goldberg's output during his final decades and a celebration of his lasting influence on popular culture. A selection of his late-in-life political cartoons traces the remarkable coda of his long career, while his enduring popularity is underscored by such items as the 1995 Rube Goldberg U.S. Postage stamp. *The Art of Rube Goldberg* offers visitors an intimate look into the life and legacy of one of the keenest and wittiest observers of modern times, a man whose name has entered the cultural lexicon and whose influence continues to reverberate into the 21st<sup>st</sup> century.

To accompany the exhibition, the Queens Museum commissioned an interactive multimedia machine inspired by Goldberg's invention drawings. The machine integrates video animations with real mechanical chain reactions, combining, for example, an electric fan and a watering can with animations of a cartoon bird and cat, all inspired by figures in Goldberg's cartoons. It was designed and fabricated by Partner & Partners with Greg Mihalko, Stephan von Muehlen, and Ben Cohen, who work as part of the Gowanus Studio Space in Brooklyn. "The most surprising and challenging aspect of this project is that Rube Goldberg's original drawings are implausible, if not totally impossible," the trio note in their artistic statement. "But of course, that's the whole point. By combining animation, simple machine design, and the magic of modern

technology, we hope we have created a work that honors Rube Goldberg’s sensibilities and still functions in the context of the museum.”

The content of *The Art of Rube Goldberg* is based on the book of the same title, published by Abrams ComicArts, and includes over 75 original drawings and sketches, video stations screening Goldberg’s films and taped interviews, as well as photographs, books, magazines, and other materials. The companion book, *The Art of Rube Goldberg*, accompanies the exhibition.

### **About the Organizers**

*The Art of Rube Goldberg* was conceived by artist Creighton Michael, developed in cooperation with Heirs of Rube Goldberg, LLC, NY, NY, and curated by Max Weintraub.

Max Weintraub is Senior Curator at the Aspen Art Museum. He holds a Ph.D. in modern and contemporary art from the history of art department at Bryn Mawr College and has worked in curatorial and educational departments at the Denver Art Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Modern Art. Weintraub’s essays on Bruce Nauman, Robert Barry, William Anastasi, William Kentridge, Giambattista Tiepolo, and others have appeared in books, exhibition catalogues, academic journals, and scholarly volumes.

The Rube Goldberg organization consists of two different companies: RGI (Rube Goldberg, Inc.), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit; and HRG (Heirs of Rube Goldberg), the for-profit arm. Both RGI and HRG work together to maximize the full potential of Rube Goldberg’s life’s work—a rich archive, 50,000 drawings deep—as a funding source to help endow its not-for-profit STEM and STEAM Education Initiatives.

The exhibition began a national tour in 2017 at the Museum of Pop Culture, Seattle, Washington, and traveled to the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan; the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco; the Portland Public Library, Portland, Maine; and the National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia.

The tour was organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, D.C., a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally through exhibitions, programs, and services to artists, arts institutions, and the public. More information can be found at [artsandartists.org](http://artsandartists.org).

### **About Partner & Partners**

Ben Cohen, Greg Mihalko, and Stephan von Muehlen have collaborated on wide-ranging projects for years. Whether working on exhibit projects through the design firm Partner & Partners, making machines for the robotic coffee equipment company Poursteady, or as members of a number of community-based art collectives including Mare Liberum, the Sunview Luncheonette, and the Gowanus Studio Space, they always look for interesting ways to combine the charm of analog technologies with the digital.

### **Funding and Support**

Major funding for the Queens Museum is generously provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Lambent Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation. The official hotel sponsor of the Queens Museum is Boro New York.

## **About the Queens Museum**

The Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park features contemporary art, events of hyperlocal and international impact, and educational programs reflecting the diversity of Queens and New York City. Changing exhibitions present the work of emerging and established artists, both local and global, that often explore contemporary social issues, as well as the rich history of its site. In November 2013, the Museum reopened with an expanded footprint of 105,000 square feet, a soaring sky-lit atrium, a suite of daylight galleries, nine artist studios, and a flexible event space. The Museum works outside its walls through engagement initiatives ranging from multilingual outreach and educational opportunities for adult immigrants, to a plethora of community-led art and activism projects. The Museum's educational programming connects with school children, teens, families, and seniors as well as those individuals with physical and mental disabilities. The Queens Museum is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Visit [www.queensmuseum.org](http://www.queensmuseum.org). Follow us at [@queensmuseum](https://twitter.com/queensmuseum).

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