

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Press Kit

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Artist's Statements

“Art is the acceptance of solitude. You express your solitude by being an artist if you can, if you have it in you ”

“Life is made of emotions. The objects I have created make them tangible”

“Horizontality is a desire to give up, to sleep and be passive, to retreat. Verticality is affirmation, an attempt at a peaceful compromise and a desire for acceptance. Hanging and floating are states of ambivalence and doubt”.

“The unconscious is volcanic in tone and yet you cannot do anything about it. You had better be its friend, or accept it, or love it if you can, because it might get the better of you. You never know”

“Blue represents peace, meditation, and escape. Red is the affirmation at any cost - regardless of the dangers in fighting – of contraction, of aggression. It's symbolic of the intensity of the emotions involved. Black is mourning, regrets, guilt, retreat. White means go back to square one. It's a renewal, the possibility of starting again, completely fresh. Pink is feminine. It represents a liking and acceptance of the self.”

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Louise Bourgeois with her sculpture *Baroque*
at Museum of Modern Art à New-York , 1st February 1983. Photo: Ted Thai.

Biography

Louise Bourgeois was born on December 25th, 1911 in Paris. She studied at the École de Beaux-Arts of Paris and joined Fernand Léger's atelier. In 2000 the artist has been charged to curate the opening installation in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London. Her works are part of the most important international public collections, such as the MoMA (which held her first retrospective in 1982, and to which Bourgeois donate the entire editions' collection) and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Her oeuvre is also included in many important private collections. All along her career, Bourgeois received important awards, such as the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale (1999) and the Légion d'Honneur of the French Republic (2008). In 2009 she has been honored by the National Women's Hall of Fame for her contribution in the history of the United States. In 1951 Bourgeois officially became an American citizen. She died in New York, where she moved in 1938, on May 31st 2010, aged of 98 years.

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Fountain Couple, 1999, Aluminium with black patina and white paint, water, 167.6 x 205.7 x 129.5 cm (each).
© The Easton Foundation, New York. Photo: Christopher Burke, New York

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

10.04.2021 – 26.06.2021

Opening on Saturday 10 April 2021

Galerie Karsten Greve is delighted to present its new solo exhibition dedicated to the oeuvre of Louise Bourgeois (1911 – 2010) at its Parisian gallery. Through a selection of major works created between 1946 and 2007, all acquired directly from the artist, the exhibition pays tribute to one of the most remarkable visual artists in the history of contemporary art and reflects more than thirty years of close collaboration with Karsten Greve.

Louise Bourgeois could be the artist who most drew on her personal experience and trauma to fuel her work. By using art as a therapy, she gave shape to her emotions and developed a corpus of themes and motifs through her sculptures, drawings, multiples and paintings.

Between 1938, year of her arrival in New York, and 1949, she carried out a limited number of paintings and, in 1945, inaugurated her first solo exhibition at the Bertha Schaefer Gallery with twelve paintings often associated with her arrival in the United States and her relationship with France. Consequently, her painting evolved into a very personal kind of figuration in which the surrealist influences are evident. *New Orleans*, dated 1946, is a perfect example. A feminine figure is represented in profile: a self-portrait of the artist holding a bouquet of olive branches. She is turned towards a table featuring motifs that recur throughout her oeuvre: spirals, scissors, the spider, leaves... Moreover, the generalised use of intense blue is a statement of positivity, as, for Louise Bourgeois, the colour symbolised freedom and solace.

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That uprooting and her arrival in the United States would be exorcised through sculptures as well as paintings, in her first series she called “*Personnages*” (“Characters”). At that time, Louise Bourgeois felt a deep nostalgia for France and the relatives and friends she had to leave. Between 1945 and 1955, she designed a series of more than eighty sculptures made from wood or bronze, which she set up on the roof of her building, surrounded by skyscrapers. These precariously balanced slim figures reflected the verticality that surrounded her as well as modernist vocabulary, in line with the shapes of a Brancusi or a Giacometti. They became the symbol of the psychological instability experienced by the artist during those years and a way for her to convoke those she missed. Each totem of the “family” has its own shape, its own individuality. Through them, Louise Bourgeois developed major themes that recur throughout her artistic production such as the theme of maternity in *Woman with a Secret* (1947), one of the first occurrences of the woman-mother motif. Several of these “*Personnages*” also blend figures and architectural shapes such as her *Portrait de Jean-Louis* (“Portrait of Jean-Louis”) (1947-1949). In this case, Louise Bourgeois applied the iconography of the woman-house to her son, born in 1940.

The lower part of the sculpture is anthropomorphic, with two legs clearly outlined, while the upper part is architectural and reminiscent of the New York skyscrapers that fascinated her so.

At the end of the 1990s, Louise Bourgeois revisited these totems with textile versions, in which verticality was created by piling up sewn blocks of fabric. In *Sans titre (Calme Toi)* (“Untitled (Calm Yourself)”) (2000) and *Sans titre* (“Untitled”) (2002), these “cushions” combine geometric motifs and plain-colour fabrics in an unstable heap that seems as though it could collapse at any moment. This use of fabric was a way for Louise Bourgeois to rebuild her own past.

Throughout her career, Louise Bourgeois experimented with various materials for her sculptures. For her totems, she worked with wood, fabric, bronze, and plaster and latex in the 1960s. Her marble works are a tribute to the baroque sculpture of the 17th century and particularly to the Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini. *Baroque* (1970), exhibited at her first retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1982, can be interpreted as a metamorphosis and contemporary readaptation of the famous sculpture *Apollo and Daphne*. In the 1990s, Louise Bourgeois created a series of works from aluminium. The reflective capacities of the material make it possible to have spectators confront the artist’s message and become the actors of their own psychology, as in *Le Miroir* (“The Mirror”) (1998) and the mural reliefs *Toi et Moi I* (“You and Me I”) and *Toi et Moi II* (“You and Me II”) (1997), the monumental curves of which undulate over the wall. Both reliefs work as complementary motifs in which the concave roundness of the convolutions of one is the counterpart of the edges of the convex reliefs of the other. This perfect but unstable geometry expresses all the ambiguity of the relationships that were both a source of anxiety and a necessity for the artist. The variant of this theme was the motif featuring in *Couple*, which Louise Bourgeois addressed through sculpture only from the 1990s. In this aluminium version from 2003, she associated a figurative representation of the human body with an abstract spiral motif. Spirals both symbolise complementarity and create distance. The couple is suspended in mid-air, turning on itself in a state of ambivalence and perpetual fragility, frozen for eternity in an almost embrace.

The spiral motif, fundamental in the oeuvre of Louise Bourgeois, returns in *The Fountain Couple* (1999). She chose here to represent the duality and complementarity of couples through these two sculptures/fountains made of concentric circles, built to resemble a den. The infinity of these motifs - which she associated with the spins performed to rinse fabrics in the river in her youth - suggests the flowing of life-giving liquid. In this case, Louise Bourgeois conceived the couple as a refuge, a creative entity.

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In addition to sculpture, drawing was the most important means of expression for Louise Bourgeois. By seizing her visual thoughts in mid-flight and recording them as in a secret diary, her *Pensées-plumes* (“Thought-feathers”) were a way of exorcising her anguish. Figurative drawings were, for her, a way to externalise and free herself of negative memories, while abstract drawings came from a profound need for peace. The last years of Louise Bourgeois’ career were marked by a return to the theme of maternity (*Femme* - “Woman” - 2007). She represented pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding in gouache, using an intense red loaded with an expressive force. Red represents both blood and life, passion and love. Simultaneously simple and poetic, painful and soothing, these images convoke overwhelming experiences in her life as both woman and artist.

As well as drawings, the production of multiples (engravings, dry-point prints and illustrated books) was a significant part of Louise Bourgeois’ oeuvre. Created in 1998, *Topiary (The Art of Improving Nature)* addressed the theme of topiary, the art of tree-trimming, and the regenerative power of plants following trauma as a metaphor for personal issues. With *Anatomy* (1990), she gave shape to the effects of psychological pain on the human body.

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Louise Bourgeois

Baroque

1970

Marble

94.6 x 64.1 x 65.7 cm / 37 1/4 x 25 1/4 x 25 3/4 in

BOUR-0056

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Louise Bourgeois

Woman with a Secret

1947 - 1949

White painted bronze, Ed. 4/6

163.1 x 30.4 x 30.4 cm / 64 1/4 x 12 x 12 in

stamped on the lower right side: *LB 4/6*;

stamped on the lower left side: *MAF 01*

BOUR-4761

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Louise Bourgeois

Untitled

2002

Watercolor, pastel, ink and charcoal on paper

39.9 x 20.9 cm / 15 2/3 x 8 1/4 in

Signed recto lower right: *LB*

BOUR-5878

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Louise Bourgeois

The Couple
2003

Aluminium, hanging piece

Ed. 2/6

121.9 x 66 x 38.1 cm / 48 x 26 x 15 in

Stamped on the top: *LB 2/6 MAF 07*

BOUR-6267

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Louise Bourgeois

Sans Titre/ Untitled

2002

Fabric and stainless steel

180.3 x 25.4 x 30.4 cm / 71 x 10 x 12 in

Signature welded into the base: *LB*

BOUR-5440

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Public collections (Selection)

American Craft Museum, New York, USA
Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Australie
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France
British Museum, Londres, Royaume-Uni
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, USA
Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, USA
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, USA
Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, USA
Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, USA
Grafische Sammlung Albertina, Vienne, Autriche
Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Espagne
Hakone Open-Air Museum, Tokyo, Japon
Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Gardens, Washington, USA
Jane Addams Park, Chicago, USA
Kunstmuseum Basel, Bâle, Suisse
Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Suisse
Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern, Suisse
MET Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japon
Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Allemagne
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA
MoMA Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienne, Autriche
Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, Canada
Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA
New Orleans Museum of Art, Nouvelle-Orléans, USA
New York Public Library, New York, USA
Olympic Park, Séoul, Corée du Sud
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA
Muséo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Espagne
Samsung Museum of Modern Art, Séoul, Corée du Sud
Tate Modern, Londres, Royaume-Uni
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Pétersbourg, Russie
Tokyo International Forum Art Work Project, Tokyo, Japon
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA
Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, USA
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Awards (Selection)

- 1973 Artist Grant, National Endowment for the Arts
- 1977 Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree from Yale University, New Haven
- 1980 Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts from Women's Caucus for Art
- 1981 Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson
Elected Fellow of American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston
- 1983 Elected Member of American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York
Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston Nommée
Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, de Jack Lang, Ministre de la Culture
- 1983 President's Fellows Award, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree, Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore
- 1985 Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan
- 1987 Honorary Doctorate, The New School, New York
Gold Medal of Honor for Excellence in Art, National Arts Club, New York
- 1989 Creative Arts Award Medal for Sculpture, Brandeis University
"Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement", College Art Association
- 1990 MacDowell Medalist, MacDowell Colony, Peterborough
"The Sculpture Center Award for Distinction in Sculpture 1990"; The Sculpture Center, New York
- 1991 Lifetime Achievement Award, International Sculpture Center, Washington D.C.
Obtenu le Grand Prix National de Sculpture du Ministère de la Culture, Paris
- 1993 Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts (DFA) by Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York
Mayor's Awards for Art & Culture, New York City
- 1995 The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo and The Hakone Open-Air Museum, Kanagawa-ken, Japan, 1995 Biennial Award and Purchase prize for ARCH OF HYSTERIA
Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts, Art Institute of Chicago
- 1997 National Medal of Arts du Président Clinton à la Maison Blanche
- 1998 Academician of the National Academy, New York, Sculpture Class
Lion d'Or pour le Maitres de l'Art Contemporain, Biennale di Venezia.
- 1999 Praemium Imperiale Award in the sculpture category from the Japan Art Association.
- 2000 Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts, The Art Institute of Boston, Boston
Honorary Member, Akademie Der Bildenden Kunste, Vienne
- 2003 Wolf Prize in the Arts (Painting and Sculpture), Wolf Foundation, Israel
- 2005 Medal of Honor, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
- 2006 The Intrepid Award, National Organization For Women, Washington D.C.
- 2007 Austrian Honour Medal for Science and Arts
The "Woman Award", The United Nations and Women Together, New York
- 2008 Legion d'Honneur du Président Sarkozy
Aragon-Goya Award, Goya Foundation, Aragon Government, Zaragoza
- 2009 National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, New York

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Solo shows (Sélection)

- 2021 *Louise Bourgeois*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Louise Bourgeois: Freud's Daughter, The Jewish Museum, New York
Louise Bourgeois: What is the Shape of This Problem, Esker Foundation, Calgary, Canada
- 2020 / 21 *Louise Bourgeois*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St-Moritz, Suisse
- 2019 *Louise Bourgeois. To Unravel a Torment*, Voorlinden, Wassenaar, Pays-Bas
Louise Bourgeois in the Rijksmuseum Gardens, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Pays-Bas
Louise Bourgeois: The Eternal Thread, Song Art Museum, Beijing, Chine (Travelling Exhibition)
- 2018 *Louise Bourgeois. Editions*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Louise Bourgeois. Works on paper, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Allemagne
Louise Bourgeois: The Eternal Thread, Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, Chine
Louise Bourgeois, ICA Miami – Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami FL, USA
Louise Bourgeois: To Unravel a Torment, Glenstone Museum, Potomac MD
Louise Bourgeois: The Empty House, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Allemagne
- 2017 / 18 *Louise Bourgeois, An Unfolding Portrait*, MoMA, New York, USA
- 2017 *Louise Bourgeois. Human Nature. Doing, Undoing and Redoing*, Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norvège
Louise Bourgeois. Twosome, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel
Louise Bourgeois: Spiders', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2016 / 17 *Louise Bourgeois. Structures of Existence: The Cells*, Musée van Hedendaagse Kunst, Anvers, Belgique, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Allemagne; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscou, Russie; Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Espagne; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Danemark
- 2015 / 16 *Louise Bourgeois. No Exit*, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA
- 2015 *Louise Bourgeois. I Have Been to Hell and Back*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Suède
- 2013 *Louise Bourgeois. Editions*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Allemagne
Louise Bourgeois, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Louise Bourgeois. Alone and Together, Faurschou Foundation, Copenhagen, Danemark
Louise Bourgeois. Alone and Together, Faurschou Foundation, Pékin, Chine
Between the Lines. Graphikfolgen von Louise Bourgeois, Graphic Collection, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Suisse
- 2012 *Louise Bourgeois - Passage dangereux*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hambourg, Allemagne
Louise Bourgeois. The Return of the Repressed, Freud Museum, Londres, Royaume-Uni
- 2011 *Louise Bourgeois: À l'infini, Hommage zum 100. Geburtstag*, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen (Bâle), Suisse
Louise Bourgeois. The Return of the Repressed, Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires, Argentine;
The Instituto Tomie Ohtake, Sao Paulo; Museu do Arte Moderno, Rio de Janeiro, Brésil

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- Louise Bourgeois. Le Surréalisme, C'est moi*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche
Louise Bourgeois. Femme, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik, Islande
- 2010 *Grafik auf Stoff und Papier*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Allemagne
Louise Bourgeois. Skulpturen und Zeichnungen, Städtische Museen, Jena, Allemagne
Louise Bourgeois. Mother and Child, Nordiska Akvarellmuseet, Skärhamn, Sweden & Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, Danemark
- 2009 *Louise Bourgeois*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C., USA
Louise Bourgeois. A Stretch of Time. 40 Jahre Karsten Greve Köln, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Allemagne
- 2008 *Louise Bourgeois*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
Louise Bourgeois, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples, Italie
- 2007 - 09 *Louise Bourgeois: Retrospective*, Tate Modern, Londres, Royaume-Uni; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C., USA
- 2006 *Crouching Spider by Louise Bourgeois*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA
Louise Bourgeois. La Famille, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Allemagne
- 2005/06 *Louise Bourgeois. Center of Gravity*, Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turquie
Louise Bourgeois: Back and Forth, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche
- 2004/05 *Louise Bourgeois. Prints*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2004 *Louise Bourgeois. Drawings, Books, Prints*, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Suisse
Drawings by Louise Bourgeois, St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, USA
- 2003/05 *Louise Bourgeois. Stitches in Time*, Irish Museum of Art, Dublin, Irlande; The Fruitmarket Gallery, Édimbourg, Écosse; Centre of Contemporary Art, Málaga, Espagne & Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, USA
- 2003/04 *A View From the Outside: Louise Bourgeois. The Reticent Child*, Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienne, Autriche
- 2003 *Louise Bourgeois. The Insomnia Drawings*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- 2002/03 *Louise Bourgeois. Le Jour La Nuit Le Jour*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
- 2002 *Louise Bourgeois. Œuvres récentes*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2001/03 *Louise Bourgeois at the Hermitage*, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russie; Helsinki City Art Museum, Helsinki, Finlande; Kulturhuset, Stockholm, Suède; Museet for Samtidskunst, Oslo, Norvège (2002), Museet for Samtidskunst, Oslo, Norvège; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Danemark
- 2001/02 *Louise Bourgeois*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Bilbao, Espagne
- 2001 *Louise Bourgeois. Œuvres récentes*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2000 / 01 *Louise Bourgeois*, Grafiska Sällskapet, Stockholm; Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Norrköping; Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Göteborg, Suède

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- Louise Bourgeois. Spiders*, Rockefeller Center, New York, USA
- 1999/2000 *Louise Bourgeois. Architecture and Memory*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Espagne
- Louise Bourgeois. Inaugural Installation of the Tate Modern Art at Turbine Hall*, Tate Modern, Londres, Royaume-Uni
- Louise Bourgeois. The Space of Memory*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyunggi-Do, Corée
- The Welcoming Hands by Louise Bourgeois*, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France (installation permanente)
- 1998 *Louise Bourgeois*, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbonne, Portugal; Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Danemark; Serpentine Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni
- 1998 *Louise Bourgeois. Topiary*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- Louise Bourgeois*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- Louise Bourgeois. Homesickness*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japon
- 1997 *The Drawings of Louise Bourgeois*, Centro Cultural da Light, Rio de Janeiro, Brésil
- Louise Bourgeois. chez Karsten Greve. Dessins récents*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 1995/96 *Louise Bourgeois*, MARCO, Monterrey, Mexico; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Séville, Espagne; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexique
- Louise Bourgeois. Dessins*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 1994 - 96 *Louise Bourgeois: Print Retrospective*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France; Musée du Dessin et de l'Estampe Originale, Gravelines, France; The Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, Royaume-Uni; Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, Pays-Bas
- Louise Bourgeois: Pensées-plumes*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Helsinki City Art Museum, Helsinki, Finlande
- 1993 - 96 *Louise Bourgeois: The Locus of Memory*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA; Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, République Tchèque; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Deichtorhallen, Hambourg, Allemagne; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, Canada
- 1992/93 *Louise Bourgeois*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 1989/91 *Louise Bourgeois. A Retrospective Exhibition*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Francfort sur le Maine; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Allemagne; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France; Fundación Tàpies, Barcelone, Espagne; Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Suisse; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Pays-Bas
- 1982 / 84 *Louise Bourgeois: Retrospective*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio, USA
- 1979 *Louise Bourgeois, Sculpture 1941-1953. Plus One New Piece*, Xavier Fourcade Gallery, New York, USA

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- 1978 - 79 *Louise Bourgeois: Matrix / Berkeley 17*, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, USA
- 1964 *Louise Bourgeois: Recent Sculpture*, Stable Gallery, New York, USA
- 1959 *Sculpture by Louise Bourgeois*, Andrew D. White Art Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA
- 1950 *Louise Bourgeois: Sculptures*, Peridot Gallery, New York, USA
- 1949 *Louise Bourgeois, Recent Work 1947-1949. Seventeen Standing Figures in Wood*, Peridot Gallery, New York, USA
- 1947 *Louise Bourgeois: Paintings*, Norlyst Gallery, New York, USA
Louise Bourgeois. Recent Work 1947 - 1949: Seventeen Standing Figures in Wood, Peridot Gallery, New York, USA
- 1945 *Paintings by Louise Bourgeois*, Bertha Schaefer Gallery, New York, USA

Group Exhibitions (Selection)

- 2020 *I'm yours: Encounters with Art in Our Times*, ICA Boston, Boston MA, *'On Everyone's Lips. From Pieter Bruegel to Cindy Sherman*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Allemagne
Fantastic Women. Surreal Worlds From Meret Oppenheim to Louise Bourgeois, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Danemark
Fantastic Women. Surreal Worlds From Meret Oppenheim to Louise Bourgeois', Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Allemagne
- 2019 *The Red Bean Grows In The South*, Faurshou Foundation, New York, NY, USA
Beyond Infinity. Contemporary Art After Kusama, ICA – Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston MA
Susanna Koeberle vous propose Elisabeth Kübler, jevouspropose, Zürich, Suisse
Luogo e Segni, Palazzo Grassi, Punta della Dogana, Venise, Italie
A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women, Muzeum Susch, Zernez, Switzerland
- 2017 *Women House*, La Monnaie de Paris, Paris, France
Inextricabilia, la Maison Rouge, Paris, France
- 2016 *Embracing the Contemporary: The Keith L. and Katherine Sachs Collection*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA
Basquiat, Dubuffet, Soulages... Une Collection Privée, Fondation de l'Hermitage, Lausanne, Suisse
- 2015 *The Great Mother*, Palazzo Reale, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan, Italie
- 2014-2015 *The Art of Our Time. Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Collections*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao, Espagne
- 2013 *Les Papesses*, Palais des Papes, Avignon, France
- 2011-2012 *Louise Bourgeois: the return of the repressed*, Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires, Argentine
Louise Bourgeois. À l'infini, Fondation Beyeler, Bâle, Suisse
- 2010-2011 *Louise Bourgeois: Moi Eugénie Grandet...*, Maison de Balzac, Paris, France

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- 2010 *Hans Bellmer – Louise Bourgeois: Double Sexus*, Sammlung Scharf Gerstenberg, Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany. *Voyage à Gemeentemuseum Den Haag*, Pays-Bas
- 2006 *Space: Places of Art*, Akademie Der Künste, Berlin-Mitte, Allemagne
Picasso and American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA
À Ses Parents, Villa Jeanneret-Perret (La Maison Blanche by Le Corbusier), La Chaux-de-Fonds, Suisse
- 2006 *Inner Worlds Outside*, Fundación la Caixa, Madrid, Espagne; Whitechapel Art Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Irlande
Center of Gravity, Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turquie
Sculpture in Space, Musée Rodin, Paris, France
Contrepoint 2: De l'objet d'art à la sculpture – Porcelaines contemporaines, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
- 2004-2005 *Fifth Biennial - Disparites & Deformations: Our Grotesque*, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, USA
Art and Architecture 1900-2000, Palazzo Ducale, Gênes, Italie
Woman: Metamorphosis of Modernity, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelone, Espagne
Beauty and the Beasts, MART- Museo di Arte Contemporanea, Rovereto, Italie; Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Allemagne
- 2004 *Double Blind: Kunst Kinder Karriere*, Paula Modersohn Becker Museum, Bremen, Allemagne
Artéfacts: La Vie Secrète des choses, Fondation d'Art Contemporain Daniel & Florence Guerlain, Les Mesnuls, France
Ideal and Real, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologne, Italie
The Great Parade: Portrait of the Artist As Clown, Grand Palais, Paris, France; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada
- 2003-2004 *Challenging Tradition: Women of the Academy 1826-2003*, National Academy of Design Museum, New York, USA
The Anxious Creation, Galleria d'Arte Moderna at Palazzo Forti, Verone, Italie
Saint Sebastian. A Splendid Readiness for Death, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche
Drawing Modern: Works from the Agnes Gund Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, USA
51st International Art Exhibition, La Biennale de Venise, Venise, Italie
- 2003 *Louise Bourgeois and James Lee Byars*, Musée National d'art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
On this side of the sky: UNESCO salutes Women in Art, UNESCO Paris, France
Insomnia: Night Landscapes, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C., USA
- 2001-2002 *Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age, 1940-1960*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY, USA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville; San Diego Museum of Art; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, USA
True Grit: Seven Female Visionaries before Feminism, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, USA; Boise Museum of Art, Boise; Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, Richmond; University of New Hampshire, Durham; El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso; University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington; Newcomb Gallery, Tulane University, New Orleans; Center for the Visual Arts, Metropolitan State College of Denver, Denver, USA

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- 1999 / 2000 *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950-2000*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
Surrealists in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School, Reina Sofia / Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Madrid, Espagne; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, France
- 1999 *Uncommon Threads: Contemporary Artists and Clothing*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA
Rodin to Baselitz: The Torso in Modern Sculpture, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Allemagne
From Pablo Picasso to Louise Bourgeois: Classic Modernity and Contemporary Art from America, Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Allemagne
The Surreal Woman: Femaleness and the Uncanny in Surrealism, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Allemagne
48th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art, La Biennale de Venise, Venise, Italie
- 1998 / 2000 *Les Champs de La Sculpture*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan
Bourgeois-Holzer-Lang, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche,
- 1998 *Wounds: Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Suède
- 1997 Fifth International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turquie
Amour, Fondation Cartier, Paris, France
A Decade of Collecting: Recent Acquisitions in Modern Drawing, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1996 *Women in the Arts*, Washington, USA; Whitechapel Gallery, Londres, Royaume-Uni
- 1995 / 96 *Féminin-Masculin: Le Sexe de l'Art*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
The Material Imagination, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York, USA
- 1995 XLVI Esposizione Internazionale d'arte, Venice Biennale, Venise, Italie
In Three Dimensions: Women Sculptors of the 90s, The Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island, USA
A Heart as a Friend, Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italie
- 1993 *Et tous ils changent le monde*, IIème Biennale d'art Contemporain, Lyon, France *Andere Länder - andere Sitten: Zeichnungen aus dem Kunstmuseum Bern*, Palais Kinsky, Nationalgalerie Prag, Prague, République Tchèque
- 1992 *documenta 9*, Cassel, Allemagne
From Brancusi to Bourgeois: Aspects of the Guggenheim Collection, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- 1991 *Art of the Forties*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1990 / 91 *Four Centuries of Women's Art (Selections from the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC)* The Bunkamura Museum of Art, Shibuya, Tokyo, Japon; The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Kanagawa; Sapporo Tokyo, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japon; Tenjin Iwataya, Fukuoka, Japon; Daimaru Museum Umeda, Osaka Japon; Nagano Tokyu, Nagano, Japon; Hiroshima Museum of Art, Hiroshima, Japon; Matuszakaya Museum, Nagoya, Japon
Road to Victory, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1990 *Positions of Art in the 20th Century: 50 Woman Artists*, Museum Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, Allemagne
- 1989 *Bilderstreit*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Allemagne
Enduring Creativity, Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County, USA
Magiciens de la Terre, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

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- 1988 / 89 *Art in Place: 15 Years of Acquisitions*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
Figure as Subject: The Revival of Figuration Since 1975, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; Erwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Wichita, USA; The Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, USA; Amarillo Art Center, Amarillo, USA; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City USA; Madison Art Center, Madison, USA
- 1987 *Black and White*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
The 100 Days of Contemporary Art of Montreal 1987: Stations, CIAC Montréal International Centre of Contemporary Art, Québec, Canada
La Femme et le Surréalisme, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Suisse
1987 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- 1986 *Works in Bronze: A Modern Survey*, Sierra Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, USA
- 1985 / 86 *An American Renaissance: Painting and Sculpture Since 1940*, Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, USA
American Art: American Women, Stamford Museum and Nature Center, USA
Spuren, Skulpturen und Monumente ihrer präzisen Reise, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, Suisse, commissaire d'exposition: Harald Szeemann.
- 1983 *Twentieth Century Sculpture: Process and Presence*, Whitney Museum of American Art at Phillip Morris, New York, USA
- 1982 *The Human Figure*, Contemporary Arts Center, Nouvelle-Orléans, USA
Houses, Sculpture Center, New York, USA
- 1981 *Sculptor's Drawings over Six Centuries*, The Drawing Center, New York, USA
- 1977 *30 Years of American Art 1945-1975: Selections from the Permanent Collection*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content, Brooklyn Museum Art School, Brooklyn, USA
- 1976 *Sculpture: American Directions, 1945-1975*, New Orleans Museum of Art, Nouvelle-Orléans, USA, organisé par la National Collection of Fine Arts; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1975 *20th Century Masterworks in Wood*, Portland Art Museum, Portland, USA
Sculpture: American Directions, National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, USA
American Art since 1945 From the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1972 *American Women Artists Show*, Kunsthaus, Hambourg, Allemagne
- 1970 *L'Art Vivant aux Etats-Unis*, Fondation Maeght, St. Paul de Vence, France
- 1969 *The Partial Figure in Modern Sculpture*, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, USA
6th Biennale Internazionale di Scultura, Carrare, Italie
- 1965 *Les Etats-Unis: Sculpture du XX Siècle*, Musée Rodin, Paris, France
- 1961 *Recent Acquisitions*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1958 *Nature in Abstraction*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- 1955 *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors and Drawings*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- 1954 *Reality and Fantasy 1900-1954*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA
18th Annual Exhibition of American Abstract Artists, Riverside Museum, New York, USA
- 1953 *40 Pictures from the Lee Ault Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA

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- 1951 *Second Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture*, Stable Gallery, New York, USA
Recent *Acquisitions*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1949 *Third Annual National Print Exhibition*, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, USA
Group Show, Peridot Gallery, New York, USA
- 1947 *7th Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by Guest Members of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors*, Wildenstein and Co., New York, USA
- 1945 *Textile Design*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
- 1944 *Modern Drawings*, San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, USA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1943 *The Arts in Therapy: A Competition and Exhibition*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
- 1942 *Arts for Victory: An Exhibition of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
- 1936 *Exposition de L'Atelier de la Grande Chaumière*, Galerie de Paris, Paris, France

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Louise Bourgeois

Fountain Couple

1999

Aluminium, black patinated and white painted, water, Ed. 1/2

167.6 x 205.7 x 129.5 cm / 66 x 81 x 51 in

White element stamped: *LB MAF 99 1/2 element 2/2*;

Black element stamped: *LB 1/2 MAF 2000 element 1 of 2*

BOUR-10363

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Louise Bourgeois

The Welcoming Hands

1996

Bronze with polished silver nitrate patina, Ed. 2/3

17.7 x 88.9 x 43.1 cm / 7 x 35 x 17 in

stamped on bottom: *LB 2/3 MAF 2010*

BOUR-10429

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Louise Bourgeois

New Orleans
1946

Oil on cardboard
66 x 55.2 cm / 26 x 21 3/4 in

Titled, signed and dated verso: "*New Orleans*" L BOURGEOIS. 1946 32 E 57
BOUR-6372

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Exhibition of Louise Bourgeois, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, 1990

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ARTnews

Louise Bourgeois's Iconic Spider Sculptures Have a Surprising History

By Claire Selvin, May 19, 2020 5:03pm

Louise Bourgeois's art took many different forms, and it often explored topics such as memory, sex, and trauma. But the works that have come to define the late artist's career are her sculptures of spiders, some of which tower 30 feet into the air and menacingly loom over viewers' heads. Below is a guide to Bourgeois's sculptural practice and why later in her life she chose the spider as the subject of her work.

Childhood traumas and early-career experiments laid the groundwork for the spiders.

Born in Paris in 1911, Bourgeois began making drawings for her parents' tapestry restoration business early on. She often recalled that, as a child, she became aware that her father was leading an affair with her tutor. After studying at Paris's most important art schools, she moved to New York in 1938 to study at the Art Students League. While her earliest pieces were paintings and prints, she would begin creating sculptures in the 1940s, focusing first on wood works and laying the groundwork for her spider sculptures decades later.

In 1949, Bourgeois had a solo show dedicated to her sculptures at Peridot Gallery in New York. The exhibition featured her wooden "Personnages" sculptures, which she created from 1945 to 1955. These slender abstract works each possess idiosyncratic characteristics like curves and crevices. The artist said that such works served as vehicles through which she grappled with memories of people from her childhood and early life in Paris—comments that foreshadow ones she would later make about her spiders.

In the following decades, Bourgeois's work expanded dramatically in scale.

After her first New York solo show, Bourgeois continued pushing her art in new directions. In the 1950s, spirals began appearing frequently in her sculptures. She once described the twisting form, which would become a central motif in many of her later sculptures, prints, and paintings, as a representation of "control and freedom" for her. The artist began using materials like bronze, plaster, and marble in the 1960s to make sculptures based on human anatomy, from limbs and breasts to genitalia.

These works wound up establishing the sense of disquiet and uncanniness that would be felt in much of Bourgeois's art thereafter. With the series "Cells," which Bourgeois began creating in 1989, several years after her 1982 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, the artist addressed the notion of entrapment. She formed impenetrable barriers with her caged environments containing sculptures and sundry items like furniture, tapestries, and clothing. These psychologically fraught sculptures are meant to envision states of isolation.

Bourgeois began creating her iconic spider sculptures toward the end of her career.

Bourgeois started crafting her famed steel spider sculptures in the 1990s. The artist had previously experimented with arachnid forms in two ink and charcoal drawings made in 1947, but her sculptural series would take those ideas to a monumental scale. Perhaps influenced in part by her early years at the tapestry restoration business, Bourgeois once explained that she chose the spider as a subject because its traits reminded her of her mother. "She was deliberate, clever,

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patient, soothing, reasonable, dainty, subtle, indispensable, neat, and as useful as a spider,” the artist said.

Maman, which was created for the grand opening of Tate Modern in London in 2000 and remains in the institution’s collection, is the biggest of Bourgeois’s spiders. Visitors can navigate around the creature’s eight splayed legs and peer up at its body, an elegant knot of coiling forms. Under its body, the large-scale spider carries a sac of marble eggs. One of six bronze casts of the original steel work stands grandly in an exterior plaza at the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain. Editions of *Maman* can also be found in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, and other international institutions.

Bourgeois’s spiders remain enduring sources of intrigue for many.

Having been the subject of a public exhibition at Rockefeller Center in New York in 2001, a longterm display at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art beginning in 2017, and many more spaces around the globe. Bourgeois created spiders of all different sizes, including small-scale brooches and overlapping networks of legs and bodies into the 2000s. A critical body of work in a long practice of exploring psychology, emotion, and the complexities of human relationships, Bourgeois’s spiders have become some of the most widely recognizable sculptures in the world.

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CHRISTIE'S

Louise Bourgeois: An Unfolding Portrait

Curator Deborah Wye discusses the first comprehensive survey of the artist's prints and illustrated books, on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York

For Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), art was no less than a tool of ‘survival’ and a ‘guarantee of sanity.’ Best known for her spider sculptures and provocative figures, Bourgeois’s hugely influential work explored themes of sexuality, motherhood, domesticity and the human body across a range of mediums. Key among these was printmaking, which she turned to in the earlier and later periods of her seven-decade career.

Louise Bourgeois: An Unfolding Portrait, on view until 28 January 2018 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, is the first comprehensive survey of Bourgeois’s prints and illustrated books. The exhibit draws on MoMA’s vast archive of Bourgeois’s printed work, which the artist promised to the museum in 1990.

Curated by Deborah Wye, Chief Curator Emerita of MoMA’s former Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, and a longtime friend of the artist, the retrospective situates Bourgeois’s prints in the context of her overall practice and creative process. Here, Wye explains how closer consideration of Bourgeois’s prints allow us to watch her ‘imagination unfold’.

Louise Bourgeois has a long history with MoMA, and you have a long and close history with the artist as well. What made you decide that now was a good time to revisit her prints?

Deborah Wye: ‘When Bourgeois made the gift of her print archives in 1990— with acquisitions coming in for the rest of her life — we committed to documenting and exhibiting the works. In 1994, we published the first catalogue raisonné of her prints up to that date. It included about 150 individual compositions and, with evolving states and variants, about 600 sheets in total. We also mounted an exhibition at that time. Bourgeois was in her 80s then, and we couldn't have known she would live to be 98, and that her print practice would flourish in the last decades of her life. ‘Bourgeois died in May 2010, and later that year I retired as Chief Curator of Prints at MoMA. But I continued to work with the museum on a new comprehensive online catalogue raisonné of her prints on the MoMA website. Right now we have 4,300 sheets available live, and hope to finish our cataloguing by this spring. We expect to have a total of about 5,000 sheets. The exhibition is a celebration of this project.’

How has reception of her work changed in the past 30 years, since the first MoMA exhibit?

DW: ‘When I curated the first retrospective of her sculpture at MoMA in 1982, the general museum audience had never heard of her. She hadn’t really sold anything at that point, so most everything we exhibited still belonged to her.

‘It has been very gratifying, in the decades since, to see how her work evolved and to see how much it is now appreciated. At first her work could be baffling, even to me, but by the 1990s it was as if the art world had caught up with her. People like [Kiki Smith](#) and [Robert Gober](#) and others were dealing with the body, with the grotesque and abject, but she had been dealing with those subjects all along. ‘That was the decade she

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represented the United States at the Venice Biennale. She was named by *Art News* as one of the 10 best living artists and one of the century's 25 most influential artists. And it wasn't just her recent work that was getting attention — people were also discovering her early sculpture and that of her middle years.'

How did you approach curating this exhibit? Did you have an overarching philosophy or framework?

DW: 'With this show, I wanted to present her prints in relation to her other production — to show it as integral to her overall practice. Bourgeois said that she didn't see any 'rivalry' between mediums — that they all said the same thing, just in different ways. I wanted to convey that, and to make the exhibition an exploration of her creative process.'

How is your own perspective on her work different now?

DW: 'Louise's psychoanalytic writings were discovered in 2004 and 2010, while she was still alive. She had denied to me and others that she had ever been in therapy. But in fact she started psychoanalysis in 1952, after her father died. She continued in intensive analysis until about the mid-60s, and intermittently until her analyst died in 1985.'

'Learning this made a big impact on me, and I became very interested in what the psychoanalytic process meant for her work. I always knew she was a great writer, but her psychoanalytic papers are particularly intense and revealing. When they were discovered, she re-engaged with them, asking that they be read aloud to her, and approved their study and publication. Now they're an essential part of her legacy.'

Can you tell us about the trajectory of her printmaking?

DW: 'In the late 1930s and 1940s Bourgeois was a painter and printmaker, and did not turn to sculpture until later in the decade. At that point, she gave up painting and didn't return to printmaking until the late 1980s. In the 1990s and 2000s, printmaking became part of her daily practice. In those years, one of her major innovations was with fabric prints and books. 'For decades, Louise had saved her old clothes — and those of her mother and of her own childhood years — as well as fabric items from her trousseau. She never wanted to give them up. Eventually she started cutting up the garments and other fabrics to make sculptures of heads and figures. By turning those old clothes into works of art, she ensured that they would never be thrown away. 'Then, in 2000, she began to experiment with printing on fabric — on linen handkerchiefs, placemats and hand towels. She loved the results, particularly the way the ink absorbed into the cloth, and the tactile qualities of the surfaces. From then on, fabric became her favourite printing support. She later expanded into fabric books, filled with collages made from bits of her old clothes.'

What does her print production reveal about her broader creative process?

DW: 'Bourgeois loved to revisit her imagery, which makes printmaking ideal. Creating evolving states is part of the process — artists often print sheets at various stages in the development of a composition, to see how things are coming along. Bourgeois could produce 20 or 30 evolving states. Changes were often based on her moods at a particular time or on a particular day. 'She was also a very inventive storyteller. She filled her diaries and notebooks with pithy phrases, poetic lists, parables. The illustrated book format gave her the opportunity to use these writings. 'She also enjoyed the artistic collaboration that is inherent in printmaking, where specialised skills and equipment are often necessary. Louise engaged with printers and publishers at her

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studio in Chelsea, and was energised creatively by these interactions. Even if she was tired on a certain day, or not in a very good mood, she never turned her collaborators away.'

Bourgeois became a feminist role model, even if she was herself ambivalent about that label. What was her relationship to the feminist movement, and how did it change over the years?

DW: 'Bourgeois's mother ran a tapestry restoration business, so from a young age she was exposed to a very capable, professional woman. But I think like other women in the 1940s and 1950s, she suffered from the unequal treatment of men and women — men had jobs and the respect that came with that, and women were often expected to be at home with the children. She felt the inequities of the art world, as well. But her work was also not in line with the trends of that time. When the feminist artists began to celebrate her in the 1970s, she was appreciative and happy. 'While she was not instrumental in launching feminist art organisations, she did participate in various activities — in feminist exhibitions and panels, and in protests. On the other hand, she bristled at the qualification of being a 'woman artist'. She just wanted to be the 'best artist'.

'Also, she had a bit of difficulty with the feminist artists who looked up to her as a mother figure. She would say, "Oh no, I need a mother myself!"'

What do you hope viewers will take from the show?

DW: 'I hope visitors engage with the work on an emotional level. Even though Bourgeois was motivated by her own emotional struggles — loneliness, anxiety, anger, jealousy and despair — we all recognise those same emotions in ourselves. Her work can make a powerful connection to this realm of our consciousness.'

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VOGUE

Louise Bourgeois's Latest Show Is a Must-See for Women in the Digital Age

September 29, 2017 8:42 PM

by Bridget Read

Trafficking in your own trauma was perhaps the hallmark of being a woman in the digital world; there were clicks to be had in revealing your most painful memories. It feels like we've moved on now, and for good reason—fetishizing female pain is not the same as empowering women. But where did it all go? The prevailing digital aesthetic now is one of sterilization, extreme minimalism. Even advertisements for Thinx, the period panties, employ a pleasant pastel color palette on which blood is smeared, and a cool, unbothered font. We were in agony—have we simply been fixed? Is everything okay, just like that?

The opposite impulse, to foreground blood and bodies instead of making them more palatable, characterizes the work of Louise Bourgeois. Famous for her sculptures, the artist also made thousands of two-dimensional pieces, on prints, in books, and on fabric, which are currently on display in a new exhibition “Louise Bourgeois: An Unfolding Portrait,” at the Museum of Modern Art. The effect of the show, which is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, is to travel through the artist's process, her emotional and artistic evolution; to be forced through her ecstatically traumatized vision of her life, and come out anew.

Long before LiveJournal, Carrie Bradshaw, or Twitter, Bourgeois was writing about herself; she just wasn't showing it to everyone. Beginning in the 1940s, the content of her work was provocative, sexual—sculptures containing holes, apices, shafts, mouths—but she was reluctant to discuss her biography. That is, until 1982, when she published *Child Abuse*, a project in *Artforum* to coincide with her retrospective at the MoMA, the first for a woman artist at the museum. *Child Abuse* was “perversely confessional,” as Joan Acocella recalled in *The New Yorker*. It accounted for the inspirations behind her figures of women, as household objects and carved open, dissected creatures, and the anatomies of men, mostly their genitalia. She told the story of her father, a master tapestry restorer in France, who had cheated on her mother with a teenage governess, in the most distraught, painfully inarticulate terms: “Instead of / which she betrayed me.” Then her mother died young, and the betrayal was doubled. The words were printed on the magazine's pages, strangely artless and awkward in their appearance, next to images of Bourgeois's sculptural work.

Rather than turning people off, her sudden willingness to divulge the details of her personal life coincided with a postmodern, feminist wave of artists and art critics, who clamored to exalt Bourgeois as an antidote to the yawn-worthy abstractions and surrealisms of the modern male New York set. Her popularity endures in the same light; it's easy to see, in this latest exhibition, why her work would resonate with a third-wave audience used to the high-traffic Instagram post, a hashtag, a phrase on a phone case, or a T-shirt. *Fillette*, the giant penis in latex over plaster, is

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missing from the current show, but two of her giant spiders are on display. Prints and fabric books say, “Merci Mercy,” “Keep Me Together/Do Not Abandon Me/Hold My Bones Together,” and “Mr. No Thank You.”

It’s the sheer volume of Bourgeois’s work here, not unrelated to its curation, that hits with incredible force, in which the repeated forms of spirals, pillars, veinlike tubing, umbilical cords, phalluses, faces, and traumatized, paralytic bodies become a refrain in a nightmarish lullaby. *Lullaby*, in fact, a series of 25 screen prints, is composed of blot-like shapes superimposed, like spills, onto sheet music-style paper. They are Rorschach tests—you can pick out some images, a penis, of course, or an acorn, but you wish you couldn’t. The impression is one of being taught something you don’t want to learn, something grotesque.

That’s the singular, surprising gift of this show, compared with the other installations and exhibitions of the work of Bourgeois. Instead of the commanding, instant impact of a lone sculpture like *Maman*, her most famous spider, or *Fillette*, or one of her beloved *Cells*, the overwhelming amount of serial works shown together display the artist’s intense anxiety, and its relationship to her practice. The figure of Saint Sebastian, in a staggering series of images, begins as a side view of a woman in light ink, watercolor, and pencil; then she has a cat’s face coming out of her own head; then she has voluptuous thighs, hips, buttocks, and breasts; finally, she has no head at all, cut off in cross section, like a cadaver or the stump of a tree, with arrows pointing to her body parts like in a diagram. The first drawings to the last drypoint prints span eight years, and the catharsis they offer is not one of redemption, but of purified pain.

Bourgeois is known for saying, “The subject of pain is the business I am in.” Roberta Smith shrewdly called Bourgeois’s work “product” in her review of “An Unfolding Portrait” in *The New York Times*, which I might push further into “content”—especially as the items in MoMA’s huge collection are now digitized online. There is much here that will be cut up and spliced across the Internet, and wallpapered onto social media. But perusing the images on my computer at home, hours after seeing the exhibition in person, I felt their loss, no longer under the huge weight of the 1,200 pieces that the walls, tables, and ceilings of the museum’s rooms also bore. I realized that if I wrote down on paper or in a diary as much as I’ve written online and in text messages over the last 15 years, I might fill such a space. I don’t think I have a chance now.

In her own words, Bourgeois has said, “My early work is the fear of falling. Later on, it became the art of falling. How to fall without hurting yourself. Later on, it is the art of hanging in there.” This inheritance of survival is undoubtedly the labor of women, or it has been, historically—now the waters we swim in are murkier, since we’ve been told we are no longer drowning. And yet there is much pain left to be endured. It’s like we spent the last few years getting everything off our chests, and then hit “send,” as if the work of understanding ourselves and improving our circumstances has simply been archived. Witnessing Louise Bourgeois’s life in art is to understand that it is never over.

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Wallpaper*

Louise Bourgeois

The French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) may have been 96 years old when she joined Rei Kawakubo and Zaha Hadid as our joint Guest Editor in October 2008 (W*115), but she took on the role with the energy of someone half her age. Bourgeois worked with three long-time collaborators – fashion designer turned artist Helmut Lang, architect Peter Zumthor and artist Roni Horn – to curate a unique edit of their work

For such a tiny woman – she stands barely 5ft tall – Louise Bourgeois is a formidable presence. And, at 96, she still continues to work. Except on Sundays. But, more on that later. Bourgeois (born on Christmas Day in 1911) grew up in France, the middle child of parents who ran a tapestry restoration business. Surrounded by textiles and fabric and women busily sewing and weaving, she demonstrated artistic skill at an early age and was often called upon to draw in missing portions of a tapestry so it could be repaired. Her mother even had to embroider fig leaves over male genitalia occasionally to make certain tapestries more palatable to some of the workshop's upper-crust clientele. While all of this may sound rather idyllic, there was trouble in paradise. In 1982, just before her first major retrospective exhibition was due to open at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Bourgeois made the startling revelation – in an illustrated autobiographical text called *Child Abuse* published in the December 1982 issue of *Artforum* – that her childhood governess had been her father's mistress for more than ten years. They conducted their affair in the home and on family trips, all under the watchful, and impressionable, eye of young Louise, who was often used by her mother to report on their activities. She felt betrayed by those she trusted and this pain made an indelible impact.

Plumbing the depths of her painful childhood memories, Bourgeois exorcised her demons and used her autobiography to create some of the most intensely powerful art of our time. Witness *Maman*, the towering steel spider sculpture that the public first came to know in 1999 in the Turbine Hall at the newly opened Tate Modern. While the spider motif appeared in Bourgeois' work in the 1940s, it wasn't until the 1990s that she used it to create spectacular bronze and steel installations of monumental proportions. Rather than being threatening or terrifying, her spider is a symbol of benevolence and protection. She equates its work as a restorer and weaver with her mother and with the busy hands of the women in the tapestry workshop, saying, 'I come from a family of repairers. The spider is a repairer.'

However, Bourgeois' memories have also manifested themselves in work with a decidedly macabre subtext. In her seminal 1974 work *Destruction of the Father*, she imagines a dinner at which her family, tiring of her father's boasts about his success, dismember and cannibalise him. Rather than being an active participant in this massacre, Bourgeois places herself, and the viewer, as spectators observing the drama, as if in a theatre.

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A performance that accompanied *Confrontation*, a work from this same period, reveals the artist's mischievous side. While the work itself continued the rather gruesome narrative established in *Destruction of the Father* – with a panoply of indeterminate latex objects that could symbolise body parts laid out on a platform resembling a hospital stretcher – the performance imbued it with a dose of humour. When the work debuted at New York's Hamilton Gallery in 1978, the artist staged a performance that she called *A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts*. A parade of art world luminaries walked a makeshift runway to a punk music soundtrack, outfitted in costumes with bulbous protuberances, all designed by Bourgeois. Transforming the usually serious academics into outlandish figures was part of the fun. Of this, Bourgeois says, 'In the 1960s and 1970s, my sculptures could be read as undulating landscapes as well as 'bodyscapes'. The sculptures were a second skin that I wanted to model. Clothes are as much about what you want to hide of the body as what you want to expose. This is a form of communication. Body language is very important to me and it is true that there is beauty in distortion.'

Bourgeois' notions about the nature of beauty and the bodily distortions she created with her costumes have found reverberations in contemporary fashion. Rei Kawakubo's iconic spring/summer 1997 collection for Comme des Garçons, entitled 'Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body', consisted of garments plumped and padded in unusual places with goosedown, which gave the runway models grotesquely beautiful shapes. Although Kawakubo has said that the silhouettes of people wearing rucksacks, fanny packs and baby carriers were what inspired her, one can assume that the designer, who is known to have a strong interest in contemporary art, is familiar with Bourgeois' work. While many of the 'Body Meets Dress' pieces ended up in museum collections because they were deemed to be more like artworks than wearable clothes, a museum patron turned up in one of the outfits at the recent opening of Louise Bourgeois' retrospective at New York's Guggenheim. Seeing her, dressed in Kawakubo's bumps and bulges and juxtaposed with Bourgeois' voluptuous forms, was a fitting tribute to two artists who have challenged conventions of beauty.

While Bourgeois often uses fabrics, textiles and her own clothes in her work, she has never been tempted to design clothes. Dressed as a child in the latest looks from Coco Chanel and Paul Poiret, she has given many of her old clothes pride of place in her work, notably her *Cell* installations from the 1990s. Of these, she has said, 'You can remember your life by the shape, weight, colour and smell of those clothes.' She famously turned up for her 1982 sitting with Robert Mapplethorpe wearing a monkey-fur coat (and carrying her 1968 sculpture, *Fillette*, essentially a 2ft-long phallus) and has said that the coat could make her feel like a bear – powerful and threatening. Helmut Lang, with whom Bourgeois has become great friends, used this portrait for one of his advertising campaigns and commissioned a photograph of Bourgeois by Bruce Weber for another. 'It was Ingrid Sischy [then editor of *Interview*] who introduced me to Helmut. We hit it off instantly. He was a runaway, like me. He would send me beautiful clothes,' tells Bourgeois. For his part, Lang says, 'Louise has for me a European elegance and the charismatic energy of a woman who has defined her life as an artist, mother and lover and emerged stronger each time. Whenever I see her I feel completely enriched, touched, seduced and impressed by her ability to combine continuity, perfection and anarchy as one emotion. I carry that feeling of her with me as long as I can every time I see her.'

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The two have collaborated several times since meeting. In 1998, Lang selected Bourgeois and artist Jenny Holzer to show their work alongside his in a three-person exhibition at Vienna's Kunsthalle, recognising that all share a common interest in the investigation of the human body and the obsessions and neuroses that constitute identity and determine relationships. In addition to using photographs of Bourgeois in his ads, Lang's model wore a reproduction of a silver choker Bourgeois designed in 1948 in his 2003 spring/summer collection fashion shows, while a soundtrack of Bourgeois singing French songs played. They also worked together on designs for T-shirts and scarves. Lang, who now works almost exclusively as an artist since he sold his label to Prada in 2004, hasn't seen Bourgeois as regularly recently due to a self-imposed isolation while working on his art. He was reluctant to show it to her until he felt it was good enough. Now finished, Lang's new work (featured in this issue), including an installation of sculptural pieces called *Alles Gleich Schwer (or Everything Has Equal Weight)* at the Kestnergesellschaft gallery in Hanover, has attracted Bourgeois' attention.

That Bourgeois is deeply interested in contemporary culture should come as no surprise. It is doubtless one of the things that keeps her young. She encourages artists like Roni Horn, whose *Library of Water* project in Iceland she supported through art patron Artangel, and she's currently working with architect Peter Zumthor on a commission in Vardø, Norway. When asked what draws her to particular artists, she says that, as well as their work, it's that they are, like her, lonely runners and independent thinkers.

The other thing that keeps Bourgeois young is that she continues to work » every day except Sunday. She's decidedly unsentimental about her earlier work, asserting, 'I'm exclusively interested in the piece I'm doing at the moment and nothing else.' She doesn't make sculpture as much these days, but makes lots of drawings and prints, some with collaged elements, like a work titled *Don't Swallow Me* that incorporates one of her old petticoats, flattened from the top down so that the waist looks like a void or hole. The collage was included in the Guggenheim show and was completed just a week before it opened in June.

Despite her strong work ethic, Bourgeois believes in taking one day off. But not working on Sundays gave her the blues, she says, and she began to invite friends over. This is how her now-legendary Sunday salons began. They are for visual artists, musicians, poets, singers, dancers and curators, and have turned into something of an open call for young artists to present their work. Bourgeois seems a little thrilled by the fact that Faye Dunaway came to a salon this summer. She describes the afternoons that have become an important part of her life: 'We've had Guillermo Kuitca, Nan Goldin and Jonas Mekas, together with many younger artists. The younger artists are special. Some want an endorsement of their work, others think I can help them get a gallery, or they want me to hire them as an assistant. Many are isolated after school. There seems to be a lot of pressure to make it [in the art world]. The quality of the afternoons depends entirely on the group dynamic, sometimes aided with alcohol. [Bourgeois often serves wine or Campari.] We've had tears, fights and people being ejected.' In fact, a young artist once referred to the Sunday afternoons at Bourgeois' home as visiting the 'smackdown shack'. Being the feisty, opinionated woman she is, Bourgeois seems to take a demonic pleasure in this moniker. While many of us would envy the roster of guests appearing at the salons over the years, Bourgeois has her own ideas of guests she would invite to an imaginary 'dream' dinner party. Without hesitating, she

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names Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Donald Winnicott, all legendary psychoanalysts, as well as Francis Bacon, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt and Richard Serra, three artists she admires.

As Bourgeois doggedly continues to make art, she never repeats herself but continues to mine her memories and give visual form to her life, to her passions, her regrets and her fears. Recognising the duality that is present in much of her work – back to the spider, at once benevolent and deadly – Bourgeois psychoanalyses herself: ‘I’m a person torn apart by conflicting impulses. I want things I know are not good for me. I say things that I shouldn’t say and I do things that I shouldn’t do. There is violence. I break things and then there is guilt and regret. The duality is in the work. There is an ambivalence to everything.’

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE PARIS

5, rue Debelleyme
F-75003 Paris
Tel. +33 (0)1 42 77 19 37
Fax +33 (0)1 42 77 05 58
info@galerie-karsten-greve.fr

Opening Hours:
Tuesday – Saturday : 10 am - 7 pm

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE KÖLN

Drususgasse 1-5
D-50667 Cologne
Tel. +49 (0)221 257 10 12
Fax +49 (0)221 257 10 13
info@galerie-karsten-greve.de

Opening Hours :
Tuesday – Friday : 10 am – 6.30 pm
Saturday: 10 am – 6 pm

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE AG ST. MORITZ

Via Maistra 4
CH-7500 St. Moritz
Tel. +41 (0)81 834 90 34
Fax +41 (0)81 834 90 35
info@galerie-karsten-greve.ch

Opening Hours :
Tuesday – Friday: 10 am -1 pm /
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