

Press Release

Louise Bourgeois Soft Landscape

Hauser & Wirth Hong Kong

25 March – 21 June 2025

Opening Reception: 5 – 7 PM, Monday 24 March



Widely recognized as one of the most important and influential artists of the past century, French-American artist Louise Bourgeois's work expresses a variety of emotions through a visual vocabulary of formal and symbolic equivalents, ranging from intimate drawings to large-scale installations. Opening on 25 March, 'Louise Bourgeois. Soft Landscape' explores the dynamic relationship between landscape and the human body in Bourgeois's work. Curated by Philip Larratt-Smith, this is her second show at Hauser & Wirth Hong Kong, and coincides with the ongoing tour of a major survey exhibition organized by the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, which will be on view at the Fubon Art Museum, Taipei, from 15 March to 30 June 2025.

Consisting of a selection of works from the 1960s up until her death in 2010, 'Louise Bourgeois. Soft Landscape' sets up a series of five interlocking dialogues that revolve around an iconography of nests, holes, cavities, mounds, breasts, spirals, snakes and water. This imagery corresponds to the themes and preoccupations that Bourgeois explored over the course of her career: the good mother, fecundity and growth, retreat and protection, vulnerability and dependency, and the passage of time. Her forms are expressed using such diverse materials as bronze, rubber, lead, aluminium, wood and marble. The exhibition foregrounds certain formal devices developed by Bourgeois, such as the hanging form, the spiral and the relief. As always in her work, there is an oscillation between abstraction and figuration.

On view throughout the exhibition space are works from Bourgeois's Lair series, first created by the artist in the early 1960s as she emerged from a deep depression and a long immersion in psychoanalysis, which all but replaced her artmaking for the better part of a decade. The Lair sculptures are protective places of retreat, like a home, and convey a mood of interiority, introspection and withdrawal.

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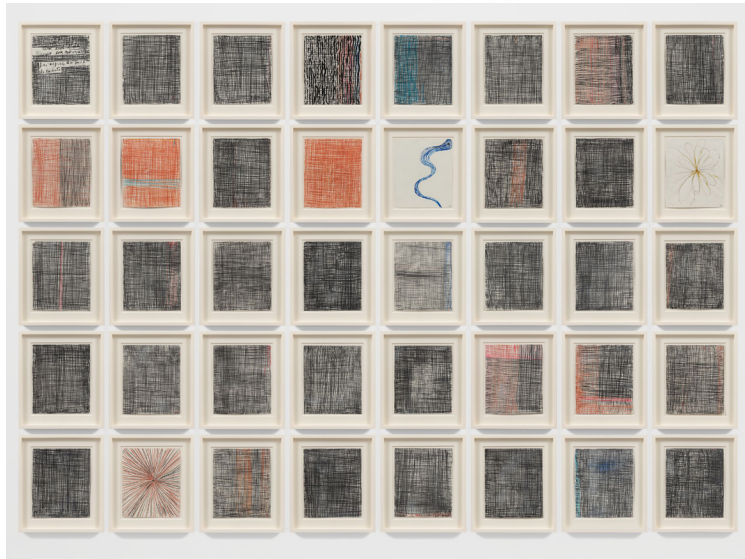
Making its debut in Asia, the sculpture 'Spider' (2000) was loosely inspired by an ostrich egg given to the artist. The large scale of the egg, relative to the spider that it contains, expresses the burdensome responsibilities of motherhood. Bourgeois's iconic spiders were conceived as an ode to her mother, yet the spider is also a self-portrait; Bourgeois felt that her art came directly from her body, just as a spider spins its own web.

A number of works that have never been exhibited before are on view in this exhibition. In one gallery, four wall reliefs of painted wood merge landscape and biomorphic form. Bourgeois fashioned these reliefs out of the interiors of old crates once used to transport her Personage sculptures. The way she put these wooden pieces together created a central opening that she would sometimes populate with internal elements. The metal frames that house these reliefs serve to make them feel more sculptural and object-like. This series of painted landscape reliefs is complemented by a long horizontal scratchboard landscape. Here the mark making is achieved through patiently scratching the dark-painted surface to make a delicate white line. The resulting image is a portrait of isolation, of a world without other people.



Also exhibited for the first time is the bronze fountain 'Mamelles' (1991 [cast 2005]), which consists of a long frieze of multiple breast-like forms, with water spilling from five of the nipples into a basin below. Bourgeois – who liked seeing how different materials could alter the meaning of her forms – also realized this sculpture in marble and pink rubber. The endless flow and splashing of the water symbolize the passage of time, but it also represents the good mother who provides nourishment for her children.

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A pair of late works on paper similarly express the passage of time through flowing calligraphic gestures on music paper that hover between an abstracted landscape and wave-like forms.

'Time' (2004) belongs to a series of suites of double-sided drawings which Bourgeois made in 2003-04. The repetitive mark-making has a meditative quality, and perhaps exerted a calming effect on the artist. The richness emerges in the slight inflections and differences in line and texture among the sheets (there is an affinity to weaving), and the occasional appearance of words, names and phrases that seem to surface from the unconscious. 'Time' (2004) has a diaristic quality, as if the artist's pen were an instrument for registering the most minute shifts in the artist's thought and mood.

About the Artist

Louise Bourgeois (b. Paris, 1911, d. New York, 2010) is one of the most influential artists of the past century. Though she worked in several mediums throughout her 70-year career—including performance, painting, and printmaking—she is best known as a sculptor. Oscillating between figuration and abstraction, and ranging from intimate drawings to large-scale installations, Bourgeois expressed a variety of emotions through a visual vocabulary of formal and symbolic equivalents. Raised in Paris and its suburbs, she was involved in her family's tapestry restoration workshop and gallery from a young age. Complex relationships with her disloyal father and chronically ill mother led to pervasive feelings of guilt, jealousy, betrayal, and abandonment. These themes, countered with love and reparation, form the core of her work. She often stated that the creative process was a form of exorcism: a way of reconstructing memories and emotions in order to free herself from their grasp.

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Gallery hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 7 pm

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Louise Bourgeois
Untitled
1993
Painted wood and fabric wall relief
57.2 x 66 cm / 22 1/2 x 26 in
Photo: Christopher Burke

Louise Bourgeois
Untitled
2004
Aluminum, hanging piece
166.4 x 106.7 x 63.5 cm / 65 1/2 x 42 x 25 in
Photo: Christopher Burke

Louise Bourgeois
Untitled
1993
Painted wood and fabric wall relief
57.2 x 89.5 cm / 22 1/2 x 35 1/4 in
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Louise Bourgeois
Lair
1986
Rubber, hanging piece
109.2 x 53.3 x 53.3 cm / 43 x 21 x 21 in
Photo: Christopher Burke

Louise Bourgeois
Landscape
2002
Acrylic and scratched drawing on India ink prepared board
61 x 182.9 cm / 24 x 72 in
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Louise Bourgeois
Spider
2000
Steel and marble
52.1 x 44.5 x 53.3 cm / 20 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 21 in
Photo: Christopher Burke

Louise Bourgeois
Time
2004
Suite of 40 double-sided mixed media drawings
Charcoal, ink, colored pencil, sanguine and pencil on paper
24.1 x 20.3 cm / 9 1/2 x 8 in each
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer