



Release Date: August 31, 2015

Bourgeois's Surrealist and Existentialist Ties are Explored in *Louise Bourgeois: No Exit* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, November 15, 2015 Through May 15, 2016



Louise Bourgeois, *M is for Mother*, 1998
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Dian Woodner
© The Easton Foundation/ Licensed by VAGA, NY

Washington, DC—Evocative drawings, prints, and sculptures by Louise Bourgeois will be presented in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from November 15, 2015 through May 15, 2016. The 21 works in the exhibition, either drawn from the collection or promised to the Gallery, reveal Bourgeois's intensely personal approach to art-making and explore her grounding in surrealism and ties to existentialism. Highlights include a vintage copy of *He Disappeared into Complete Silence* (1947), comprising nine engravings and nine disquieting parables; *Germinal* (1967), a strangely compelling marble sculpture; and *M is for Mother* (1998), a drawing of an imposing letter M that conveys not only maternal comfort but also maternal control.

"We are pleased to celebrate Louise Bourgeois in this compelling presentation," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The National Gallery of Art first acquired works by Bourgeois in 1992, when our Collectors Committee purchased and donated three of her early sculptures and a fourth was donated by the artist. Since then, especially in the last decade, our collection of works by Bourgeois has been enhanced mainly through generous gifts and pledges by Dian Woodner of New York and Tony Podesta of Washington, but also in last year's acquisition of an outstanding drawing from the Corcoran Gallery of Art."

Exhibition Organization and Support

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Louise Bourgeois

Born to a prosperous Parisian family, French American Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) first encountered the surrealists in France as a university student in the 1930s. After marrying the American art historian Robert Goldwater and moving to New York in 1938, she became reacquainted with the European surrealists who were exiled during the war. Surrealism informed her early endeavors as an artist, including her early prints, paintings, and drawings, as well as the human-size totemic sculptures for which she first gained renown. However, Bourgeois never identified with the male-dominated movement and bristled at critics who labeled her a surrealist. Instead, she self-identified as an existentialist, not only quoting philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in interviews but also naming one of her sculptures after Sartre's play *No Exit*.

The National Gallery of Art owns 19 works by Bourgeois—drawings, prints, sculptures, and an illustrated book, *the puritan* (1990)—and five additional works have been promised to the Gallery. Collectively dating from the early 1940s to 1998, they include many rare and important pieces. Indeed, the Gallery's Bourgeois collection is distinguished not for its size but for its extraordinary quality. Bourgeois's monumental *Spider* (1996, cast 1997) is on view in the Gallery's Sculpture Garden.

Exhibition Highlights

Louise Bourgeois: No Exit will present key early works, including three pen drawings (1947–1950) that evoke the cascading rivers and mountain peaks of Aubusson, the tapestry-producing region of France and home to Bourgeois's mother's family. Other highlights include the artist's psychologically

charged print project, *He Disappeared into Complete Silence* (1947)—a work that signals the imagery and themes that would engage Bourgeois until her death at age 98—and three of Bourgeois's totemic sculptures installed in a small, relatively enclosed space to faintly allude to the three souls of Sartre's play, *No Exit*, forced to co-exist in the same room in hell. Also on view are more recent works: *the puritan* (1990), an extraordinary book written and illustrated by Bourgeois, one of only a few copies hand-colored by the artist, and the drawing *My Hand* (1997), an image of the artist's knobby hand panned in striking red and splayed on a sheet of music paper.

Exhibition Curator

The exhibition is organized by Judith Brodie, curator of modern prints and drawings, National Gallery of Art.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt, Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc, and Instagram at <http://instagram.com/ngadc>.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Department of Communications
National Gallery of Art
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785
phone: (202) 842-6353
e-mail: pressinfo@nga.gov

Anabeth Guthrie
Chief of Communications
(202) 842-6804
a-guthrie@nga.gov

Subscribe to Our E-mail Newsletters

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).

PRESS KIT

Exhibition Press Release

[Exhibition Checklist](#) (PDF 140 KB)

[Wall Text](#) (PDF 174 KB)

CURATOR BIOGRAPHY

Curator Biography:

[Judith Brodie](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Exhibition Page:

[Louise Bourgeois: No Exit](#)

PRESS CONTACTS

Laurie Tylec
(202) 842-6355
l-tylec@nga.gov

Questions from members of the media may be directed to the Department of Communications at (202) 842-6353 or pressinfo@nga.gov

The public may call (202) 737-4215 or visit www.nga.gov for more information about the [National Gallery of Art](#).

RSS (NEWS FEED)

http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/press/rss/press_feed.xml

NGA NEWSLETTERS:

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).



© 2017 National Gallery of Art
