MEDIA RELEASE

FULL-CAREER RETROSPECTIVE OF LOUISE BOURGEOIS PRESENTED AT THE GUGGENHEIM THROUGH FALL 2008

MOST COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION TO DATE OF BOURGEOIS’ Distinguished Career INCLUDES PAINTINGS, WORKS ON PAPER, ENVIRONMENTAL-SCALE INSTALLATIONS FILLED WITH FOUND OBJECTS, AND SCULTPTURAL ESSAYS IN WOOD, MARBLE, METAL, PLASTER, AND LATEX

Exhibition: LOUISE BOURGEOIS
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Dates: June 27, 2008 – September 28, 2008

(NEW YORK, NY – June 25, 2008) – Louise Bourgeois, a full-career retrospective of one of the most important artists of our time, opens Friday, June 27, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and remains on view through September 28, 2008. Organized by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in association with Tate Modern, London, and Centre Pompidou, Paris, the exhibition will fill the Guggenheim’s entire Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda and an adjacent gallery, making it the most comprehensive examination to date of Bourgeois’s long and distinguished career.

This exhibition is organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in association with Tate Modern, London, and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Support for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presentation was provided by the Leadership Committee for Louise Bourgeois: John Cheim and Howard Read; Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr.; Karsten Greve; Xavier Hufkens Gallery; Tina Kim and Hyun-Sook Lee; Jennifer and David Stockman; Ginny Williams; and Iwan Wirth.

Bourgeois was born in Paris in 1911, and immigrated to New York in 1938. One of the leading figures in 20th and 21st-century art, she has influenced multiple generations of artists with her unique and ever-evolving talent to wed form and narrative content. This ambitious retrospective encompasses over 150 of the artist’s works on paper, paintings, sculptures, and installations,
providing an unprecedented opportunity to assess her richly complex oeuvre. The Guggenheim Museum is deeply committed to Bourgeois’s art, and in 1991 acquired an in-depth selection of her work representing the span of her career to date. An important installation from the museum’s permanent collection, *Confrontation*, 1978, is displayed in the Tower 5 gallery.

Bourgeois has remained steadfastly at the vanguard of the visual arts for more than seventy years, continuing to create new bodies of work with characteristic energy and restless innovation. Throughout a career that has intersected with many of the leading avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, including Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Post-Minimalism, she has remained resolutely committed to a singular creative vision. Moving freely between abstraction and figuration, Bourgeois has developed a richly symbolic visual idiom that powerfully articulates the psychological imperatives behind her artistic process. What unifies Bourgeois’s myriad drawings, environmental-scale installations filled with found objects, and sculptural essays in wood, marble, metal, plaster or latex, is an intense emotional substance that at once exposes facets of her own personal history and confronts the more universal ethos of being human.

Present throughout her work is a fusion of seeming opposites, a deliberate dismantling of dualistic thought, which rends male from female, order from chaos, pleasure from pain. In many of her anthropomorphic sculptures, Bourgeois merges corporeal elements from each of the genders to create ambiguous but nevertheless complete entities. The tension between diametrically opposed emotional states—aggression and impotence, desire and rejection, terror and fortitude—is given palpable form in her late, room-like sculptures known as *Cells* and the more recent body of work comprising sewn figures that represent pivotal moments in the cycle of life.

The Installation

*Louise Bourgeois* encompasses representative selections from all of the major phases of the artist’s career. Visitors are greeted in the museum’s rotunda by one of Bourgeois’ iconic spider
sculptures, *Spider Couple*, 2003, and a pair of hanging aluminum works dating from 2004 that
draw on another of her signature motifs, the spiral. Appropriately, this recurring form in the
artist’s iconography finds a corollary in the unique structure of the Guggenheim’s spiraling
ramps, on which the works are arranged along predominantly chronological lines. Throughout
the exhibition, the works on paper that are an integral and constant element of Bourgeois’
creative process are juxtaposed with her sculptural works.

The main body of the exhibition begins with paintings and drawings dating from the mid-1940s
that depict female bodies half eclipsed in architectural structures – a vision of the "*femme
maison*" whose identity is literally subsumed by the responsibilities and constrictions of the
domestic role. These works are interspersed by an installation of Bourgeois’ *Personnages* in
the High Gallery. These anthropomorphic wooden totems, created as surrogates for the artist’s
former life in France, are placed in staggered relational groupings, echoing their original
installation in a series of solo exhibitions at the Peridot Gallery in New York between 1949 and
1953. Continuing up the ramps, the transitional multi-part sculpture *The Blind Leading the Blind*,
1947-49, introduces smaller groupings of *Personnages*. These slightly later works diverge from
monolithic rigidity in favor of multiple segments threaded onto a central rod, such as *Femme
Volage*, 1951, or the stacked columns of blocks that characterize *Memling Dawn*, 1951.

Around 1960 Bourgeois began to exploit the sculptural possibilities of a new repertoire of
malleable materials such as plaster, latex, and resin, creating amorphous organic forms that
evoke the human body and natural topographies. Works in this section of the exhibition such as
*Lair*, 1962, and *Fée Couturière*, 1963, present roughly textured enclosed structures, suggesting
both protective nests and sinister traps. This characteristic ambiguity of reference is extended in
the limp, indeterminate biomorphic forms of such seminal works as *Janus Fleuri*, 1968 and
*Filette*, 1968, as well as in Bourgeois’ first major environmental sculpture, *The Destruction of the
Father*, 1974 – a grisly evocation of a cannibalistic family meal. The exhibition continues with a
broad selection of sculptures executed primarily in marble and bronze, in which the pliable
softness of Bourgeois’ formal vocabulary is offset by the hard inflexibility of these traditional mediums. Many of these works are abstractions formed from the smooth, globular protuberances that the artist refers to as Cumuls (“clouds”). Others, such as the hanging bronze, Arch of Hysteria, 1993, render anatomical form with a new verisimilitude. An adjacent gallery displays Confrontation, 1978 – a tableaux of latex forms ringed by wooden barriers that are shown alongside archival footage of the performance that accompanied the piece when it was first exhibited.

The museum’s final ramps are devoted primarily to Bourgeois’ Cells – the large-scale enclosed installations that the artist produced throughout the 1990s. Incorporating both found or personal objects and carved sculptures within structures that are simultaneously claustrophobic prisons and shielding cloisters, these complex assemblages are vessels for deeply autobiographical, psychological narratives. The exhibition culminates with a selection of recent fabric-based sculptures. In these unsettling works, stuffed heads, torsos and intertwined figures – some of which are stitched from the Bourgeois’ own clothes and household linens – enact a primal drama of sexual and familial relationships.

**Exhibition Tour**
The New York presentation of Louise Bourgeois is curated by the Guggenheim's Chief Curator, Nancy Spector. The exhibition is organized by Frances Morris, Head of Collections (International Art) of Tate Gallery; Curator, Tate Modern; Jonas Storsve, Curator of Centre Georges Pompidou, and guest curator Marie-Laure Bernadac. Following its presentation at the Guggenheim, the exhibition will travel to the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art in fall 2008 and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., in winter 2009.

**Catalogue**
The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue providing an overview of Bourgeois’ life and work. Taking the form of an A-Z glossary, the catalogue encompasses relevant themes, individual works, select quotations, and succinct essays, all interspersed
with examples of the artist’s own writings. It also includes an illustrated biography and a full chronology. Published by Tate Publishing, the hard cover edition is distributed through Rizzoli at a cost of $45 in soft cover and $65 in hard cover. Both editions are available for purchase at the Guggenheim Museum store.

Education Programs

A full schedule of educational programs is being presented under the auspices of the Sackler Center for Arts Education during the run of the exhibition. For updated information regarding ticketed programs, contact the Box Office at 212 423 3587 or visit www.guggenheim.org/education.

On View in the Sackler Center

A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois

June 27-September 12

In conjunction with the retrospective, the Guggenheim’s Sackler Center for Arts Education presents A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois, an exhibition of photographs and diaries from the artist’s archives. For Louise Bourgeois, art and life are inextricably linked. Although her complex, allusive work attains a universal significance, she has spoken of the autobiographical subtext that underpins her unique symbolic language. This exhibition of photographs and ephemera illuminates the artist’s personal history, from her childhood in prewar France to present day New York. This presentation is organized by Nancy Spector, Chief Curator of the Guggenheim Museum, and entrance is free with museum admission.

Lectures and Panels

Patterns of Memory - Shapes of Anxiety

Tuesday, July 22, 6:30 PM

Professor Robert Storr, Dean, Yale School of Art offers this lecture on the rich career of Louise Bourgeois. For seventy years Louise Bourgeois has given form to the contradictions of existence at their most acute. Often figurative but just as often abstract, a prone to radical mutations, her work has seemed disparate to observers who have followed it only episodically. Now, in retrospect, it has become clear that it is knitted together by formal, thematic and emotional threads that make it all of a piece. Tickets are $10 and $7 for members and students.
Old-Age Style: Late Louise Bourgeois

Tuesday, September 16, 6:30 PM

Linda Nochlin, Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, discusses Louise Bourgeois’s “late style” within the context of the artist’s long and distinguished career. Professor Nochlin focuses on the stuffed fabric sculptures contrasting this characteristic “soft” production with the more architectonic sculptures dating from the same period. Tickets are $10 and $7 for members and students.

Eye to Eye: Artist Led Tours of Louise Bourgeois

Various Dates, 6:30 PM

This new series invites the public to join a multigenerational group of leading contemporary artists on private guided tours that explore Bourgeois’s distinctive iconography. Tours will be offered by Nayland Blake, July 7; David Altmejd, July 14 and July 21; Karen Finley, July 28 and August 27; Rachel Harrison, September 8; and Marina Abramović, September 17. Receptions with the artist offering the tour will follow. A single tour is $25 and $20 for members. Series of 3 is $60 and $50 for members. Limit 25 people per tour.

Film Screening

LOUISE BOURGEOIS: The Spider, The Mistress and The Tangerine

Friday, September 26, 6:30 pm

Directed by Marion Cajori and Amei Wallach, this new, long-awaited film about the life and the work of the iconic Bourgeois celebrates her art and her times through intimate conversations with the artist, archival footage and exquisitely shot sequences of her art, filmed from 1992 through 2008. The screening will be followed by a conversation with a circle of Bourgeois’s close friends, family and art world luminaries, including her long-time assistant Jerry Gorovoy; Nancy Spector, Chief Curator, Guggenheim Museum; and Deborah Wye, Chief Curator of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, Museum of Modern Art; moderated by Amei Wallach. Tickets are $15 and $10 for members and students.

Admission and Museum Hours: $18 adults, $15 students/seniors (65+), children under 12 free. Admission includes audio guide. Saturday to Wednesday, 10 AM to 5:45 PM; Friday, 10 AM to 7:45 PM. Closed Thursday. On Friday evenings, beginning at 5:45 PM, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information call, 212 423 3500, or visit www.guggenheim.org.
FACT SHEET

Exhibition:  

LOUISE BOURGEOIS

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Overview:  

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Born nearly a century ago, Bourgeois has remained steadfastly at the vanguard of the visual arts for more than seventy years, continuing to create new bodies of work with characteristic energy and restless innovation. Throughout a career that has intersected with many of the leading avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, including Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Post-Minimalism, she has remained resolutely committed to a singular creative vision. Moving freely between abstraction and figuration, Bourgeois has developed a richly symbolic visual idiom that powerfully articulates the psychological imperatives behind her artistic process. What unifies Bourgeois’s myriad drawings, environmental-scale installations filled with found objects, and sculptural essays in wood, marble, metal, plaster or latex, is an intense emotional substance that at once exposes facets of her own personal history and confronts the more universal ethos of being human.

Present throughout her work is a fusion of seeming opposites, a deliberate dismantling of dualistic thought, which rends male from female, order from chaos, pleasure from pain. In many of her anthropomorphic sculptures, Bourgeois merges corporeal elements from each of the genders to create ambiguous but nevertheless complete entities. The tension between diametrically opposed emotional states—aggression and impotence, desire and rejection, terror and fortitude—is given palpable form in her late, room-like sculptures known as Cells and the more recent body of work comprising sewn figures that represent pivotal moments in the cycle of life.
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Installation: Louise Bourgeois will encompass representative selections from all of the major phases of the artist’s career. Visitors will be greeted in the museum’s rotunda by one of Bourgeois’ iconic spider sculptures, Spider Couple, 2003, and a pair of hanging aluminum works dating from 2004 that draw on another of her signature motifs, the spiral. Appropriately, this recurring form in the artist’s iconography will find a corollary in the unique structure of the Guggenheim’s spiraling ramps, on which the works will be arranged along predominantly chronological lines. Throughout the exhibition, the works on paper that are an integral and constant element of Bourgeois’ creative process will be juxtaposed with her sculptural works.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

Betsy Ennis, Director, Media and Public Relations
Claire Laporte, Associate, Media Relations
212 423 3840 or [publicaffairs@guggenheim.org](mailto:publicaffairs@guggenheim.org)
User ID = photoservice Password = presspass

*Photo: Raimon Ramis © Louise Bourgeois*

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**Louise Bourgeois**

*Femme Maison*, 1947

Ink and pencil on paper

9 15/16 x 7 1/8 inches (25.2 x 18 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

© Louise Bourgeois

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**Publicity Images for**

**Louise Bourgeois**

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum**

**JUNE 27 - SEPTEMBER 28, 2008**

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To request an image that is not on the Web site, please call 212 423 3840 or e-mail publicaffairs@guggenheim.org.

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Louise Bourgeois
The Blind Leading the Blind, 1947-1949
Wood, painted pink
70 3/8 x 96 7/8 x 17 3/8”; 178.7 x 246 x 44.1 cm
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington USA)
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
Femme Volage, 1951
Painted wood
73 x 18 x 13 inches (185.42 x 45.72 x 33 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
Cumul I, 1968
Marble, wood plinth
20 1/16 x 50 x 48 1/16 inches (51 x 127 x 122 cm)
Fonds National d’art contemporain
Attribution au Musée national d’art moderne, Centre Pompidou en 1976
Centre Pompidou, Paris
Musée national d’art moderne / Centre de création industrielle
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
Confrontation, 1978
Painted wood, latex, and fabric
86 5/8 x 368 1/8 x 175 9/16 inches
(220 x 935 x 445.9 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
© Louise Bourgeois
Louise Bourgeois
PARTIAL RECALL, 1979
Wood
108 x 90 x 66”; 274.3 x 228.6 x 167.6 cm.
Private Collection, New York
© Louise Bourgeois
Photo © by Peter Moore

[Note for all Peter Moore images of art work: the photo credit must appear adjacent to or on the same page as the image or it can not be used]

Louise Bourgeois
NO EXIT, 1989
Wood, painted metal and rubber
82 1/2 x 84 x 96”; 209.5 x 213.3 x 243.8 cm.
Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création, Paris
Photo: Rafael Lobato
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
UNTITLED, 1986
Watercolor, ink, oil, charcoal and pencil on paper
23 3/4 x 19”; 60.3 x 48.2 cm.
Courtesy Cheim & Read, Galerie Karsten Greve, and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Christopher Burke
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
CELL (Choisy), 1990 - 1993
Pink marble, metal and glass
120 1/2 x 67 x 95”; 306 x 170.1 x 241.3 cm.
Collection Yedessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto
Photo credit: Peter Bellamy
© Louise Bourgeois
Louise Bourgeois
Defiance (Le Défi), 1991
Painted wood, glass, and electrical light
67 1/2 x 58 x 26 inches (171.5 x 147.3 x 66 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
Red Room (Child), 1994
Mixed media
83 x 139 x 108”; 210.8 x 353 x 274.3 cm.
Collection Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal
Photo: Marcus Schneider
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
PINK DAYS AND BLUE DAYS, 1997
Steel, fabric, bone, wood, glass, rubber and mixed media
Overall: 117 x 87 x 87 inches (297.2 x 221 x 221 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art
97.101a-s
© Louise Bourgeois

Louise Bourgeois
COUPLE IV, 1997
Fabric, leather, stainless steel and plastic
20 x 65 x 30 1/2”; 50.8 x 165.1 x 77.4 cm.
Wood and glass Victorian vitrine: 72 x 82 x 43”; 182.9 x 208.3 x 109.2 cm.
Courtesy Cheim & Read, Galerie Karsten Greve, and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Christopher Burke
© Louise Bourgeois

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LOUISE BOURGEOIS SHARES PERSONAL ARCHIVES ON OCCASION OF GUGGENHEIM RETROSPECTIVE

UNIQUE PRESENTATION OF THE ARTIST’S PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES ACCOMPANIES MOST COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION TO DATE OF BOURGEOIS’ DISTINGUISHED CAREER

Exhibition: A LIFE IN PICTURES: LOUISE BOURGEOIS
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Dates: June 27, 2008 – September 12, 2008

(NEW YORK, NY – June 23, 2008) – A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois, an exhibition of photographs, diaries, and ephemera from the artist’s personal archive, is on view at the Sackler Center for Arts Education at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from June 27 through September 12, 2008. This biographical exhibition is unique to the Guggenheim’s presentation of the major retrospective Louise Bourgeois organized by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in association with Tate Modern, London, and Centre Pompidou, Paris, which is on view in the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda and an adjacent gallery from June 27 – September 28. A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois is organized by Nancy Spector, Chief Curator of the Guggenheim Museum.

For Louise Bourgeois, art and life are inextricably linked. Although her complex, allusive work attains a universal significance, she has spoken of the autobiographical subtext that underpins her unique symbolic language. A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois offers an opportunity to visually trace the personal narratives that have informed the artist’s work throughout the past seven decades of her extensive career. Born in Paris in 1911, Bourgeois grew up in provincial France, assisting with the family’s tapestry restoration business before immigrating to New York in 1938. “Everything I do,” she has explained, “was inspired by my early life.” Viscerally present in her art is the psychic trauma of her mother’s early death, her father’s betrayal of the family...
through his 10-year affair with their live-in English tutor, and her overlapping roles of student, daughter, wife, mother and artist.

*A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois* illuminates the artist's rich life and career through a chronological display of over 75 photographs taken by her family and by fellow artists and friends such as Brassaï, Peter Moore, Inge Morath, and Baird Jones. Snapshots of Bourgeois -- in France as a child, in the studio among her iconic works, at home at her famed Sunday salons, or in the company of great artists -- are shown alongside her identification cards and passports. The artist’s original diaries, which she has kept assiduously since 1923, offer poems, sketches and daily musings, and often indicate the tensions between rage, fear of abandonment, and guilt she has suffered since childhood—tensions, however, that she has been able to channel and release through her art. Included in the presentation are 10 original invitations dating from 1945 to 1978, announcing some of Bourgeois’s New York exhibitions. These selections from the artist's archive contextualize the more than 150 works on view in the accompanying retrospective, such as Bourgeois’s early *Femme Maison* drawings and paintings of the 1940s, through the large-scale enclosed installations created in the 1990s known as Cells, to her more recent soft sculptures created from stitched fabric.

**The Sackler Center for Arts Education at the Guggenheim Museum**

Opened to the public in fall of 2001, the Sackler Center for Arts Education serves as a dynamic 21st-century education hub and learning laboratory that offers innovative public programs in the visual, performing, and literary arts. Exploration and experimentation with new technologies is the center’s hallmark, which broadens and enriches programs for youth, adults, and families. Artists as well as cultural and academic institutions are valued collaborative partners. An 8,200-square-foot education facility, the Sackler Center comprises Studio Art, Computer, and Multimedia Labs, the New Media Theater, an exhibition gallery, the Resource Center, the Conference Room, and education offices. It also includes the existing Peter B. Lewis Theater, part of Frank Lloyd Wright’s original architectural design for the building.
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Lectures and Panels

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#1091
June 23, 2008

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois

Exhibition of Photographs of the Artist and her Diaries on View in the Guggenheim's Sackler Center

In conjunction with the major retrospective of Louise Bourgeois opening on June 27, the Guggenheim's Sackler Center for Arts Education will present "A Life in Pictures: Louise Bourgeois," from June 27 - September 12, an exhibition of photographs and diaries from the artist's archives. For Louise Bourgeois, art and life are inextricably linked. Although her complex, allusive work attains a universal significance, she has spoken of the autobiographical subtext that underpins her unique symbolic language. This Sackler exhibition of photographs and ephemera illuminates the artist's personal history, from her childhood in prewar France to present day New York.

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Louise Bourgeois working on her mixed media sculpture entitled CONFRONTATION in 1978. 
Photo: Inge Morath

Louise Bourgeois in Italy in 1967 contemplating GERMINAL. 
Photo: Studio Fotografico, Carrara

Louise Bourgeois, in a latex costume designed and made by her, in front of her NYC home in 1975. 
Photo by Peter Moore © Estate of Peter Moore

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Louise Bourgeois, circa 1980.
Photo: Louise Bourgeois Archive

Louise Bourgeois seated in her Chelsea home in 1999 with THREE HORIZONTALS.
Photo: Elfie Semotan

Photo: Baird Jones

Photo: Nanda Lanfranco

Louise Bourgeois

This exhibition is organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in association with Tate Modern, London, and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

The Leadership Committee for Louise Bourgeois, with founding gifts from John Cheim and Howard Read, Karsten Greve, and Iwan Wirth, is gratefully acknowledged.
Related Public Programs
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Patterns of Memory - Shapes of Anxiety
Tue, July 22 @ 6:30pm

Professor Robert Storr, Dean, Yale School of Art offers this lecture on the rich career of Louise Bourgeois. For seventy years Louise Bourgeois has given form to the contradictions of existence at their most acute. Often figurative but just as often abstract, a prone to radical mutations, her work has seemed disparate to observers who have followed it only episodically. Now, in retrospect, it has become clear that it is knitted together by formal, thematic and emotional threads that make it all of a piece.

- Tickets $10, $7 for members, students and seniors.
- For ticket information, contact Box Office: Mon - Fri, 1-5pm, 212 423 3587
- Public Programs take place in the Peter B. Lewis Theater of the Sackler Center.

Old-Age Style: Late Louise Bourgeois
Tue, Sep 16 @ 6:30 p.m.

Linda Nochlin, Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, discusses Louise Bourgeois’s “late style” within the context of the artist’s long and distinguished career. Professor Nochlin focuses on the stuffed fabric sculptures contrasting this characteristic “soft” production with the more architectonic sculptures dating from the same period.

- Tickets $10, $7 for members, students and seniors.
- For ticket information, contact Box Office: Mon - Fri, 1-5pm, 212 423 3587
- Public Programs take place in the Peter B. Lewis Theater of the Sackler Center.
Eye to Eye
ARTIST-LED TOURS OF LOUISE BOURGEOIS

All walkthroughs begin at 6:30 pm; receptions with the artists follow.

Single tour $25, members $20
Series of 3 $60, members $55
Limit 25 per tour.

Louise Bourgeois has remained steadfastly at the vanguard of the visual arts for more than seventy years, continuing to create new bodies of work with restless innovation. Moving freely between abstraction and figuration, her richly symbolic paintings, drawings, sculptures, and installations expose facets of her own personal history and confront the more universal ethos of human emotion.

Join this multigenerational group of leading contemporary artists on private guided tours that explore Bourgeois’s distinctive iconography.

NAYLAND BLAKE
MON, JUL 7

DAVID ALTMEJD
MON, JUL 14 AND 21
David Altmejd (b. 1974, Montréal) creates labyrinthine environments infused with a fantastical and cryptic personal iconography. His sculptural installations orchestrate crystalline outgrowths, mirrored surfaces, modernist geometries, and mutated fauna in tableaux of arrested dynamism.

KAREN FINLEY
MON, JUL 28 AND WED AUG 27
Karen Finley (b. 1956, Chicago) is best known for her politically subversive and deeply personal performance art. Using her voice and body to provoke a visceral response, she forces her audiences into an uneasy confrontation with social issues such as violence against women, the AIDS crisis, and censorship.

RACHEL HARRISON
MON, SEP 8
The work of Rachel Harrison (b. 1966, New York) merges sculptural, painterly, and photographic elements. Incorporating eccentric handmade forms with found objects, she enacts a playful dialogue between abstraction and figuration, referencing art historical movements such as Pop and Minimalism.

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ
WED, SEP 17
Since the early 1970s, Marina Abramovic (b. 1946, Belgrade) has pioneered the use of performance as a visual art form. With the body serving as her subject and medium, she has explored the boundaries of emotional, spiritual, and physical states in the hope of ultimately transcending them.
Born nearly a century ago, Louise Bourgeois has stood at the vanguard of the visual arts for more than seventy years, continuing to produce new bodies of work with inimitable energy and restless innovation. Throughout a career that has stretched from prewar Paris to present-day New York and intersected with many of the leading avant-garde movements of the past century, including Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Post-Minimalism, Bourgeois has remained resolutely committed to a singular creative vision. Moving freely between abstraction and figuration, her symbolic language gives visual form to memories, feelings, and psychic states. Her drawings, paintings, sculptures, and environmental-scale installations are unified by an intense emotional substance that at once exposes facets of her personal experience and resonates with universal significance. Present throughout her art is a fusion of seeming opposites, a deliberate dismantling of dualistic thought, which rends male from female, order from chaos, pleasure from pain. In many of her anthropomorphic sculptures, Bourgeois merges corporeal elements from each gender to create ambiguous, but nevertheless complete, entities. The tension between diametric emotions—aggression and impotence, desire and rejection, terror and fortitude—is given palpable form in her late sculptures known as Cells and the more recent body of work comprising sewn figures that poignantly represent moments in the cycle of life.

Organized chronologically, the installation unfolds from the lower ramps to the top of the rotunda, interweaving the artist’s works on paper with her sculptures crafted from wood, plaster, latex, marble, and found objects to reveal the centrality of drawing in her practice. The museum’s spiraling architecture echoes and foregrounds the motif of the spiral in Bourgeois’s art, about which she has said:

A spiral has two directions. It can turn in upon itself, contracting and tightening up, or it can open out from the center towards infinity. The question is: Where do you place yourself? In my work, I emotionally and psychologically oscillate between the two directions. The spiral means that a theme can disappear and reappear twenty years later.

—Nancy Spector, Chief Curator
In the late 1940s Bourgeois abandoned painting and turned to sculpture as her primary medium. Working in a makeshift studio on the roof of her Manhattan apartment building, she carved a series of totemic wooden *Personages* that echo the verticality of the surrounding skyscrapers. From 1950 onward, the formal clarity of Bourgeois’s early sculptures was fractured in favor of greater structural complexity. In place of monolithic carving, Bourgeois turned to a method of assembly based on repeated modular forms. Some of the works from this period, such as *Memling Dawn* (1951) and *Mortise* (1950), take the form of sturdy columns of stacked blocks. Others, such as *Femme Volage* (1951), consist of mobile segments that pivot around a central axis, evoking a dynamic sense of movement.

After a period of withdrawal from the art world, Bourgeois entered a new phase of her career in the 1960s that was defined by sweeping experimentation and a pronounced shift in form. Enthused by the sculptural possibilities of a new repertoire of malleable materials such as plaster, latex, and resin, she began to create amorphous organic forms that simultaneously evoke crude dwellings, the human body, and the natural landscape. *The Lair* (1962) and *Fée Couturière* (1963) present the viewer with enigmatic enclosed structures, fraught with the suggestion of life concealed within their labyrinthine interiors. Alternating between sheltering, womblike nests and sinister traps, these works both attract and repel, constantly shifting in their symbolic valences. In 1966 the critic Lucy Lippard featured Bourgeois’s work in the exhibition *Eccentric Abstraction* at the Marilyn Fishbach Gallery, New York. This seminal exhibition linked Bourgeois to a younger generation of artists, such as Eva Hesse and Bruce Nauman, who were reacting against the hard-edged geometry and industrial materials of Minimalism in favor of a more allusive, organic idiom.
The referential ambiguity of Bourgeois’s *Lairs* and *Soft Landscapes* of the 1960s is extended in her more explicitly anthropomorphic abstractions of the same period, which merge elements of male and female anatomy. Hanging sculptures such as *Fillette* (1968) and *Janus Fleuri* (1968) eschew the binary construction of gender in favor of a fluid indeterminacy. In *Avenza* (1968–69), the artist’s characteristic biomorphic forms are massed together, suggesting not only a throng of phalluses or breasts, but also a strange topography or the fecund multiplication of organic matter. This distinctive bulbous surface recurs in Bourgeois’s first major installation, *The Destruction of the Father* (1974), a theatrical tableau that exemplifies the psychological undercurrents that inform her art.

A 1967 trip to the quarries of northern Italy inspired Bourgeois to extend her exploration of materials to carved marble. Works created that year, such as *Sleep II* (1967) and *Germinal* (1967), adapt this unyielding material to the pliable softness of the artist’s formal vocabulary, their fleshy, sexually suggestive iconography presenting a marked contrast to the classical purity of the polished stone. The artist coined the term “cumul,” after the puffy contours of cumulus clouds, to describe the smooth, globular protuberances that proliferate in works such as *Cumul I* (1968) and *Noir Veine* (1968), an association that emphasizes the ethereal quality of the works over their erotic content.
In 1982 the Museum of Modern Art in New York staged a major exhibition of Bourgeois’s work—the first retrospective to honor a female artist in the institution’s history. Far from being a concluding summation of the artist’s achievements, this milestone initiated a prolific new phase of Bourgeois’s career as she entered her seventies. Moving freely between mediums, she returned to subjects explored in earlier work, expanding and reaffirming themes that had preoccupied her for more than half a century of creative production. Signature forms, such as the *Femme Maison*, the spiral, the *Cumul*, and fragments of sexual anatomy, are vigorously reworked in alternate guises. During this period, Bourgeois began to use marble and bronze to render anatomical forms with a new verisimilitude. In a series of marble “nature studies,” undertaken from 1984 onward, she delineated figurative elements with a delicacy and a technical virtuosity that recall the greatest masters of the medium. Isolated elements of the body emerge from blocks of unfinished stone or are recombined to create strange, hermaphroditic creatures that traverse the boundaries between human and animal, male and female, replete with rich interpretative possibilities.
Having long worked in improvised spaces within her domestic environment, Bourgeois’s move in 1980 to an expansive studio in an abandoned garment factory in Brooklyn allowed her to consistently pursue work on a more ambitious scale. Over the subsequent decades, she devoted much of her energy to creating a series of haunting roomlike spaces in a manifestation of the architectural imagery that pervades her earliest work. The structures deny entry to their cloistered interiors, but the viewer is invited to peer inside and encounter a voyeuristic perspective on a private world. Bourgeois refers to these installations as *Cells*, a term that invites associations with incarceration and monastic contemplation, as well as the most basic element of the human body. Combining sculptural works with found objects she has amassed throughout her life, these complex assemblages are vessels for potent psychological narratives, revealing with unprecedented emotional intensity the artist’s attempt to confront and transmute her own history. But they also transcend their autobiographical underpinnings to become materializations of the trials of the human condition. “The *Cells* represent different types of pain,” Bourgeois has explained, “the physical, the emotional, and psychological, and the mental and intellectual.”
Throughout the 1990s, developments in Bourgeois’s work kept pace with a generational shift toward installation-based practices, as she continued to extend her series of *Cells*. Always keen to remain attuned to the latest developments in contemporary art, she has long hosted regular Sunday salons at the Chelsea townhouse where she has lived for over forty years, which provide a forum for younger artists to share and discuss their work.

In recent years, Bourgeois’s large-scale architectonic assemblages have given way to independent sculptures that possess a new quality of softness. The act of sewing, which has always held a special significance in the artist’s iconography, has become more than a symbolic gesture, as she has turned to stitching together sculptures from fabric now that large-scale carving and casting are too demanding for her advanced years. Extending her practice of incorporating clothes into her installations, Bourgeois constructs many of these fabric sculptures from scraps of tapestries—the material that played a central role in her early experience—as well as garments and household linens that she has saved over her lifetime, infusing the objects with a powerful set of memories and associations. In contrast to the artist’s more characteristic use of anthropomorphic fragments, in these late sculptures the body is fully realized. The large-scale figurative works in this series enact a primal drama of sexual and familial relationships. The intertwined forms suggest the rites of passage of sexual coupling, illness, and death, describing the universal aspects of the human experience in the most raw, unflinching, and elemental terms.