

PEDER LUND

Louise Bourgeois

29 September – 29 December 2018

Beginning Saturday, September 29th, Peder Lund will present a private showing of three important works by the French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010). The diversity of mediums, ranging from a large, bronze *Spider* to an intimate fabric work, and dates of the pieces, spanning from circa 1960 to 2005, highlight the artist's expansive 70-year-long career in which she cultivated a consistent vocabulary of forms and motifs. In this vocabulary, she was able to express aspects of her own personal history and recurring themes such as marriage, motherhood, sexuality, femininity, and domesticity.

One of a series of four vitrine works, *Untitled* (2005) explores the relationship to the passing of time through three different formal arrangements. The element on the far right is made from a series of empty cheesecloth sacks, threaded on a pole, and represents organic growth as found in nature. The sacks symbolize both the womb and the breast, and the progression from the smallest, at the bottom, to the largest, at the top, expresses vulnerability. Their flesh-like color evokes the female body.

In contrast, the middle element, which is made from clothes and old blankets, is a more rigid, geometric progression. A base of larger shapes evolves upward to the smallest shape at the top, evoking stability. Though soft, this tower relates to architecture and suggests a structure that is orderly and predictable and hence corresponds to the conscious world.

The left element relates instead to the timelessness of the unconscious. Threads pulled from spools, situated around a central pole, connect to needles that puncture a hanging black rubber shape. The needles, which can both pierce and stitch up, are representative of a wound and symbolize the reparation of trauma. Bourgeois said that her art is connected to her unconscious. Having been in psychoanalysis for many years, she often referenced different aspects of time and memory and their effect on the present. The reenactment of the past as a symbolic action was a thematic preoccupation throughout her career. *Untitled* was recently shown in *Louise Bourgeois: The Empty House* at Berlin's Schinkel Pavilion, an exhibition dedicated to the artist's sack forms from the last two decades of her life.

Bourgeois began making the spider sculptures when she was in her 80s. Psychologically speaking, these works corresponded to an unconscious shift in her motivational impulses. If her early work was made largely under the sign of her ambivalent relationship with her father, from 1990 onwards, her work evinced a strengthening identification with her mother, a tapestry weaver with whom she was very close. This shift is also evident in her well-known fabric works, made from various clothes and garments that she wore, and would culminate in her final decade with a renewed interest in the themes of pregnancy and maternity.

One of her earliest spider sculptures, Bourgeois considered *Spider* (1994) an ode to her mother. During Bourgeois's childhood, her mother ran the family tapestry atelier in which old, often threadbare tapestries were repaired and rewoven before being resold. Her mother also suffered from a lung condition, and in a reversal of roles, Bourgeois would often act as her nurse. She died when Bourgeois was only 20 years old. In *Spider*, the illness is represented by the one leg that is curled at the end while the granite egg inside its body represents her mother's protective force. Resting on points, the spider is both formidable and fragile.

Bourgeois often said the spider was clever, patient, dainty, neat and useful – like her mother. She also equated the spider to her own artistic process: the spider weaves its web from its own body, just as she produced her work from a physical reaction to her emotions and anxieties. *Spider* has been included in a number of important exhibitions of Bourgeois's work including the exhibition *ARTIST'S ROOMS* at Tate Modern, London; *Artist Rooms: Louise Bourgeois, A Woman Without Secrets*, which traveled from the Scottish National National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh to Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art and Southampton City Art Gallery; and the Fifth International Istanbul Biennial, among others.

Following a series of sculptures made from her own clothing, Bourgeois began using shirts, sheets, handkerchiefs and other fabrics as raw material for abstract fabric drawings. Bourgeois cut and repositioned the stripes and various patterns of these fabrics, transforming them into spirals and concentric circles. Some, such as the red plaid *Untitled* (2003), bear affinity to a spider's web. Bourgeois studied mathematics and geometry prior to turning to art. These works show her interest in symmetry, repetition and form while also remaining rooted in the sewing, restoration and needlework of the family tapestry atelier that was so prominent in her childhood.

Louise Bourgeois has been the subject of numerous major exhibitions, including the first showing of a living American artist at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, in 2001. In 2007, another major retrospective of her work was organized by the Tate Modern and the Centre Pompidou. Curated by Frances Morris, Marie-Laure Bernadac, and Jonas Storsve, the exhibition traveled to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. Bourgeois was named Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French minister of culture in 1983 and has been the recipient of numerous other prestigious honors, including the Grand Prix National de Sculpture; the National Medal of Arts; the first lifetime achievement award from the International Sculpture Center in Washington D.C.; and election as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.