

***Louise Bourgeois*, Edited by Francs Morris and Marie-Laure Berbadac, Rizzoli New York / Tate Modern, 2008, 304 pages**

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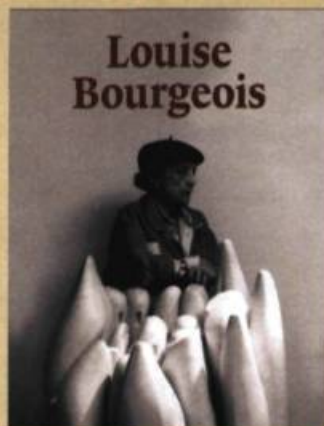
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LOUISE BOURGEOIS



Edited by Francis Morris
and Marie-Laure Berbadac
Rizzoli New York/Tate Modern,
2008.

304 pages, 240 illustrations,
hard cover

\$84.00

From her earliest installation *The Destruction of the father* (1974), including her dangling rubber *Legs* (1986), a version of which was seen at Claude Gosselin's CIAC, to *Maman* (1999), the spider, (a version is at the entrance to National Gallery of Canada), through to her installation at the Turbine Hall of the TateModern in London in 2000, Louise Bourgeois covers all the territory. Arranged letter-by-letter like an ABC book, with subjects and individual sculptures accompanied by descriptions, anecdotes, and facts, Louise Bourgeois is a comprehensive and well-illustrated book. The visuals and texts romp through Bourgeois' entire career. The letter C, for instance, includes the following: Cannibalism, calm, cells, Clamart, claustrophobia, control, colours....

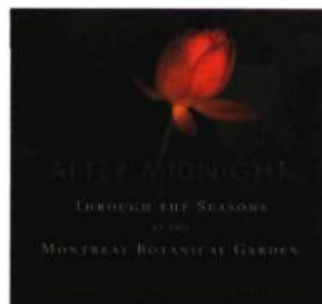
Louise Bourgeois was not disadvantaged, but she certainly was traumatized, and had a successful and domineering father. Her childhood was like a soft-celled, antique, angst ridden haute bourgeois prison. The artwork shares much in common with Francis Bacon, for both have surrealist tendencies, both are agonized, obsessive. Bourgeois met Bacon in 1951, while he was somewhat drunk, later recounting how much she admired the painter's "terrific brutality". Pleasant enough, Bacon received her as a potential client/buyer. Such ironic details inset throughout the book's texts make for a lively and exuberant romp through one of the 20th century's best sculptors' art and life.

Reading about Louise Bourgeois's early life provides us with some clues to her development and orientation as a mature artist. We learn, for instance, that Louise Bourgeois has an art gallery adjacent to, and in the same building as her father's tapestry gallery. A student at the Ecole du Louvre, she worked as Fernand Leger's assistant. Her first apartment shared the building with Andre Breton's Gradya Gallery, renowned for its surrealist exhibitions. She was married to the American primitive art historian Robert Goldwater. Something of her husband's history and fascination with African art rubbed off, for we sense a primal intensity that slips into kind of bio-formalism in her art. Bourgeois's surreal sexual sculpture broke new ground. Her art can be compared with that of contemporaries Cornelia Parker, Mona Hatoum, for its strange admixture of domesticity, body metaphor, something that feminists seized on, though Bourgeois never identified with any movement per se.

These characteristics are brought out by the very visual and readable presentation of this book. The first woman ever to have a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1983, Bourgeois represented the United States at the 1993 Venice Biennale. The oppositions and tensions, and Freudian twists seen in Bourgeois's installations reflect a contemporary vision. Bourgeois's career and art, her primal, sexual, tactile confounding bodies and cell environments, and the abrasive and eroded ambiguous forms make her a master of intrigue well versed in the language of classical, ancient, and expressionist art, but not willing to settle for any of these. This book is one of the best and most comprehensive accounts of one of the 20th century's great artists, one that celebrates the look of Louise Bourgeois's life and art. □

John K. Grande

AFTER MIDNIGHT THROUGH THE SEASONS AT THE MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDENS



Photographs by Linda Rutenberg
2008 Verve Editions, Ltd.

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Montreal photographer Linda Rutenberg has carved a niche for herself with her unique landscape and architectural photography, as well as her work using the infra-red technique. Her latest project involved taking nighttime pictures at Montreal's Botanical Gardens, capturing "sleeping" plants on film.

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