

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

Contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Installation images: downloadable [HERE](#)

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Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child

09 February - 15 May 2022



Installation views of *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* at Hayward Gallery, 2022. © The Easton Foundation/DACS, London and VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Mark Blower/© The Hayward Gallery

From 9 February to 15 May 2022, the Hayward Gallery presents *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child*, the first major retrospective of this legendary artist to focus exclusively on the works that she made with fabrics and textiles during the final chapter of her storied career. These works, many of which have never been shown before in the UK, comprise one of the greatest late career chapters in the history of art.

The exhibition focuses on the mid-1990s until Bourgeois's death in 2010; a period during which the artist forged a body of work that re-articulated many of her lifelong concerns in newly provocative and profoundly enlivening ways, including her exploration of identity, sexuality, family relationships, reparation, and memory. In surveying this late body of work, *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* explores what the artist, in her own words, called 'the magic power of the needle ... to repair the damage' and to offer 'a claim to forgiveness'.

Bourgeois created an astonishingly inventive, and psychologically charged, range of sculptures using domestic textiles, including clothing, linens and tapestry fragments, often

sourced from her own household and personal history. This departure from traditional sculptural materials represented a return to Bourgeois's roots; her connection to fabric began in her childhood, during which she helped in her family's tapestry restoration atelier in France. Bourgeois's decision to create artworks from her clothes and household textiles was thus a means of transforming, as well as preserving, the past. She viewed the actions involved in fabricating these works – cutting, ripping, sewing, joining – in psychological and metaphorical terms, relating them to notions of reparation and to the trauma of separation or abandonment.

Featuring around 90 works, *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* surveys the complete range of fabric artworks that Bourgeois produced during her last two decades. The exhibition includes major installations, notably several of Bourgeois's monumental *Cells*, in which hanging configurations of old dresses, slips, and nightwear directly reference her personal history. The imposing installation *Spider* (1997), and the related Cell piece, *Lady in Waiting* (2003), incorporate fragments of antique tapestry. Bourgeois understood the spider as both protector and predator, and associated it with her mother, a weaver and tapestry restorer. Its ability to weave a web from its own body was a metaphor that Bourgeois also used to describe her artistic process and is a particularly poignant image within this survey of her fabric work.

The exhibition includes a comprehensive range of figurative sculptures, many of which are missing limbs and heads or feature fantastical bodies that call to mind characters from unsettling fairy tales. Presented in vitrines, suspended from the ceiling, or displayed on plinths, Bourgeois's fabric figures – which largely portray female bodies – pointedly conjure states of abjection, abandonment, or entrapment. A significant selection of the artist's fabric heads are also showcased, revealing the wide range of expressions that she elaborated in these uncanny and impactful portraits. Also featured is a selection of Bourgeois's 'progressions': columns of stacked textile blocks or lozenges, organised in ascending and descending sequences. With these works, Bourgeois returned to the vertical sculptural forms that dominated her early work in the 1940s and '50s, only now rendered in soft materials.

Bourgeois regularly revisited and revised motifs from earlier works throughout her career, a practice that reached a climax with a group of four major late works, made during the last five years of her life, in which combinations of different types of sculptures are displayed together in large vitrines. Collectively, they constitute a kind of summary statement of her late fabric art.

In addition to sculpture, the exhibition highlights a wide selection of Bourgeois's vibrant fabric drawings, books, prints and collages, including collages which feature large-scale clock faces that she produced during the final year of her life.

Philip Larratt-Smith, Curator at The Easton Foundation says: "*Louise Bourgeois's fabric work is a remarkable and unexpected final act. There is no falling off in the fertility of her imagination, no slackening of the impulses behind her astonishing range of formal invention. Taken as a whole, the fabric work is both a summing up and a recalibration of the forms, processes, motifs, and ideas that obsessed Bourgeois over a lifetime.*"

Ralph Rugoff, Director at the Hayward Gallery, says: "*We are thrilled to present this*

major retrospective of Louise Bourgeois's rich and utterly compelling works made with textiles. While touching on many themes central to her earlier works, Bourgeois's carefully considered use of varied fabrics, including time-worn materials, imbues her late sculptures with a striking sense of intimacy, vulnerability and mortality. Over a decade after the artist's death, these works continue to challenge us with questions that seem more compelling and urgent than ever."

Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child is curated by Hayward Gallery Director Ralph Rugoff, with Assistant Curator Katie Guggenheim and Curatorial Assistant Marie-Charlotte Carrier. The exhibition will tour to Gropius Bau, Berlin from 22 July to 23 October 2022.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with newly commissioned essays by curator and scholar Lynne Cooke, novelist Rachel Cusk, curator Julianne-Franziska Lorz, and Hayward Gallery Director Ralph Rugoff. A programme of public talks, exhibition tours and online videos will also accompany the exhibition.

To accompany the opening of this exhibition, the Southbank Centre has launched a new, digital guide on [Bloomberg Connects](#), the free app that makes it easy to access and engage with arts and culture from mobile devices, anytime, anywhere. Available for download from [Google Play](#) or the [App Store](#), Bloomberg Connects builds on the Southbank Centre and Bloomberg's long-standing partnership and makes the Southbank Centre accessible for either onsite or offsite visits through photo, audio and video features, including exclusive content and unique insights into *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child*.

Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child is generously supported by The Easton Foundation, Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte (FABA) and Hauser & Wirth.

Additional support has been provided by *The Woven Child*: Exhibition Supporters' Group: Caroline & Eric Freymond, and Ellen & Michael Ringier; Peder Lund, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, and the Henry Moore Foundation.

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For further press information and high res images please contact:

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Listings information:

Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child

09 February - 15 May 2022

The Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

Full price standard: £15

Concessions available & Southbank Centre Members go free.

Public Programme:

On Louise Bourgeois: Jerry Gorovoy & Lynne Cooke

Wednesday 9 Feb, 7pm

As the Hayward Gallery exhibition *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* begins, join Jerry Gorovoy and Lynne Cooke in conversation on the artist.

St Paul's Roof Pavilion, Level 6, Blue Side, Royal Festival Hall; £5 (concessions available)

Phyllida Barlow and Simone Rocha on Louise Bourgeois

Thursday 24 Mar, 7pm

Join artist Phyllida Barlow and fashion designer Simone Rocha for a conversation about the lasting influence of Louise Bourgeois, chaired by journalist and academic Shahidha Bari.

Level 5 Function Room, Royal Festival Hall; £5 (concessions available)

Link to *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* web page [HERE](#)

The Hayward Gallery opening times:

11am – 9pm Wednesday

11am – 7pm Thursday - Saturday

10am – 6pm Sunday

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Further information:

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Twitter: [@haywardgallery](https://twitter.com/haywardgallery)

Instagram: [@Hayward.Gallery](https://www.instagram.com/Hayward.Gallery)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/haywardgallery/

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. They include those by Bridget Riley, Bruce Nauman, Anish Kapoor, Lee Bul, Andreas Gursky, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Kader Attia and Matthew Barney, as well as influential group exhibitions such as *Africa Remix*, *Light Show*, *Psycho Buildings* and *Space Shifters*. Opened by Her Majesty, The Queen in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).

Keeping audiences safe on site

As the Southbank Centre welcomes visitors back, our number one priority is the safety, health and

wellbeing of visitors and staff, so we have introduced a number of measures to help everyone feel confident. We continue to review and manage any risks and respond to any changes in government guidance. Full details of Covid-secure measures can be found on the Southbank Centre website [here](#).

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

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