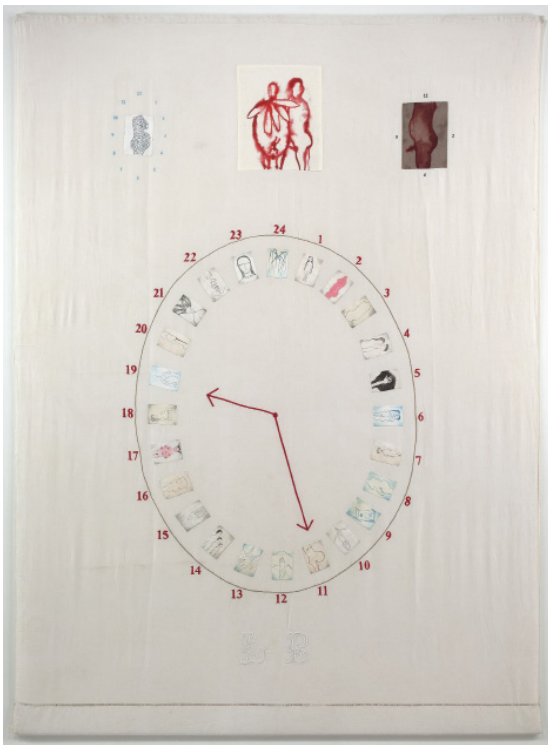


HAUSER & WIRTH

Dispatius

Press Release

Hauser & Wirth Presents Pivotal Work by Louise Bourgeois with a New Online Presentation



hauserwirth.com

Live date: 26 June 2020

Celebrated French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911 – 2010) captured her anxieties, obsessions, and affirmations in a prodigious artistic practice spanning seven decades. Beginning 26 June, Hauser & Wirth looks back on her revolutionary career through an in-depth online exploration of a single pivotal work created the year before her death. 'Louise Bourgeois. Self Portrait' articulates the autobiographical metamorphosis of the artist through her 2009 textile work 'Self Portrait,' which depicts a 24-hour clock with its hands positioned at hours 19 and 11 – numbers that together form the year Bourgeois was born.

HAUSER & WIRTH

‘Time – time lived, time forgotten, time shared. What does time inflict – dust and disintegration? My reminiscences help me live in the present, and I want them to survive. I am a prisoner of my emotions. You have to tell your story, and you have to forget your story. You forget and forgive. It liberates you.’

– Louise Bourgeois



Composed on an old bedspread embroidered with the initials L.B., the twenty-four individually printed drypoint images of ‘Self Portrait’ are collaged and stitched at each hour, marking various events from Bourgeois’s life and symbolizing distinct psychological states and relationships in chronological order. Three additional images positioned above the clock signify the emotional hierarchy of love and family. The work is a meditation on the passage of time through a unique visual language in which Bourgeois condenses her memories into images so that together they convey her life story. Bourgeois consistently revisited her past as a means of understanding her present. Here, the formal structure of the clock provides a rhythmic and conscious progression, counteracting the instability of the unconscious and its shifting psychic terrain.

As a girl, woman, wife, mother, and artist, the trajectory of Bourgeois’s life can be traced through her physical and emotional transformation as the hours on the clock advance. The first hour shows the artist as a young girl; the following images represent the girl’s rites of passage as she matures and becomes aware of her sexuality. She meets her husband, the art historian Robert Goldwater; their marriage is symbolized by a hand with a wedding ring. As time passes, she adopts a child (her son Michel), gives birth to two more sons, and has a family of her own (as shown in ‘Three Sons’ at hour 14). The relationships she creates – with Robert, with her children – are inflected and shaped by the residual effects of a traumatic childhood, her ingrained fear of abandonment and separation, and ultimately her need for love and personal connection. The importance of family is represented by the center panel above the clock, in which the female figure’s five breasts symbolize the family of five

HAUSER & WIRTH

that Bourgeois had, while also mirroring the family of five in which she was raised. In this image, she identified herself as the baby in the womb, simultaneously representing herself and doubling back in time to represent her parents.

Bourgeois's psychological states evolved as memories and past experiences were manifested in depression, insomnia, an interest in hysteria, and a deep engagement with psychoanalysis. While some images on the clock are evocative of particular art works, all serve to provide a sense of her life through the imagery she created, instigated by personal feelings of anxiety, guilt, fear, atonement, and reparation, and played out in her relationships with others. As the clock's hands return to the top of the dial, Bourgeois depicts herself at the end of her life. The final hour reveals a blue drypoint print of 'Maman,' a monumental spider figure symbolic of both Bourgeois's mother, a weaver, and of her own artistic practice: just as a spider makes its web from its body, Bourgeois felt she made sculpture through her body. By ending with this image, Bourgeois returns to the beginning – to her mother and, ultimately, to the womb, where she will continue again, cyclically, to the young girl. This vividly autobiographical work catalogs the emotions underlying and guiding the act of artmaking, the impulses that allowed Bourgeois to make sense of both her biography and inner self.

As the artist wrote, 'My life is a succession of quarters of an hour which are spent in a succession of square meters... I've schlepped Louise Bourgeois around with me for more than 40 years. every day brought its wound and I carried my wounds ceaselessly, without remission, like a hide perforated beyond hope of repair. I am a collection of wooden pearls never threaded...'

The digital presentation on Hauser & Wirth's website will allow visitors to explore 'Self Portrait' (2009) in great depth through a series of archival images and films, expanding and deepening our understanding of Bourgeois's significance in 20th century art.

For additional information, please contact:

Chloe Kinsman, Hauser & Wirth, chloe@hauserwirth.com, +447780904011 (Europe)

Irene Kopitov, Hauser & Wirth, irenekopitov@hauserwirth.com, +16467401887 (USA)

Matthew Brown, Sutton, +447715 901047, Matthew@suttoncomms.com (Europe)

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., info@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023 (USA)

Copyright and courtesy credits:

All images:
© The Easton Foundation/VAGA at ARS, NY
Courtesy The Easton Foundation and Hauser
& Wirth

Self Portrait (Mother), plate 24 of 24, from the
series, Self Portrait, 2009

Self Portrait (Three Sons), plate 14 of 24,
from the series, Self Portrait, 2009

Self Portrait, 2009
Drypoint, archival dyes, ink and embroidery
on cloth
314.3 x 231.8 cm / 123 3/4 x 91 1/4 in