

BUTLER ■ GALLERY

Louise Bourgeois

SELECTED PRINTS ON FABRIC

September 30 – November 12, 2006

*“I have always had the fear of being separated and abandoned.
The sewing is my attempt to keep things together and make things whole.”*

Louise Bourgeois

World-renowned artist Louise Bourgeois is in her 95th year and is still constantly at work. Born in 1911, Bourgeois grew up outside Paris and in the south of France, the middle child of parents whose business was the restoration and resale of 17th and 18th century tapestries and other decorative textiles. As a child, Bourgeois helped repair these tapestries, drawing in the missing parts, primarily feet, to be rewoven. Bourgeois moved to New York in 1938 with her husband, art historian and curator Robert Goldwater, and became an American citizen in 1955.

Masterful in many mediums such as sculpture, drawing and print-making, Bourgeois has created some of the most powerful and memorable work of our time in a career that has spanned over 60 years. Exhibiting since 1949, major recognition came later in her life at the age of 72, with her first retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1982.

Bourgeois' inner voice is expressed in richly diverse ways. Her lifetime's work has been marked by the frustrations of her youth. This was determined by her father introducing his mistress into the heart of the family home for ten years in the guise of her English tutor, and by the devoted and willful submission of her mother. Unlike any other artist, Bourgeois has found ways to transform and reinvent her history in remarkably evocative work. Today, Louise Bourgeois spends her days at her parlor table relentlessly working.

Since 1996, Bourgeois has been using her clothes -- from as long ago as the 1920's -- to make hanging and stuffed sculpture, and recently a series of unique fabric books. These clothes, along with a lifetime's worth of linens were gathered from chests-of-drawers and storage boxes scattered about her house.

“The books are about the idea of restoration, reconciliation, of holding things together in the face of fear of disintegration.”¹

This exhibition will focus on these extraordinary prints on fabric including *Ode à l’Oubli*, 2004 (Ode to Forgetfulness), a magnificent 36-page fabric-on-fabric book individually framed, *Lullaby*, 2006 a suite of 25 silkscreen on fabric prints and a selection of important prints on fabric from 2000-2004.

...the weave of her work – mimicking the flux of her mind and her emotions – holds seemingly incommensurable realities together like the elaborate designs of the Baroque tapestries she grew up refurbishing. At any moment the overall coherence of her art and the fabric of her explanations for how one thing is intrinsically connected to another may seem to be skewed by some unforeseen factor, some added twist. Nevertheless, like the finest textile, the threads do not pull apart, but rather absorb this added test of their strength. Where minor mends are called for, new images enter the overall picture, not only repairing but altering and more fully articulating what had been there before. In this way, Bourgeois’ recovery and recreation of her past represents an ongoing work-in-progress, whose consequences for contemporary art are, despite her obsession with her childhood and youth, artistically more forward-looking than retrospective.²

Louise Bourgeois' work is represented in numerous museum and private collections world wide. In October, 2007 “Louise Bourgeois: Retrospective” will open at the Tate Modern, London and will travel to the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

ADMISSION FREE

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¹ Jerry Gorovoy, Louise Bourgeois’ long-time assistant has said this of the books.

² Storr, Robert. *Louise Bourgeois*. London, England: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2003, pg 92-93