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NEON

Louise Bourgeois

Maman

The iconic sculpture is exhibited at the SNFCC

and accompanied by a rich program of parallel events

March 30, 2022

The **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC)** and **NEON** bring to the Greek public the iconic sculpture *Maman* (1999) by French American sculptor **Louise Bourgeois** (1911–2010). Bourgeois's monumental spider — one of the works that made her known worldwide — will be on display at the SNFCC Esplanade for seven months, openly accessible to the public.

This marks the first collaboration between the SNFCC and NEON, in a joint effort to disseminate contemporary art and facilitate its contact with a wider public. The shared objective of the two organizations is to redefine public space, as well as to upgrade the daily lives of the city's inhabitants.

The SNFCC's participation in the *Maman* installation is made possible by a recent grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) for the SNFCC's operations and programming.

Through her art, Louise Bourgeois expressed her innermost thoughts and fears, worked through her problems, and gave form to her emotions. In her prints, drawings, fabric works, installation, and, most famously sculpture, Bourgeois explores themes of guilt, fear, memory, motherhood, and love.

Bourgeois's art was informed by her life, particularly her childhood. She created her first drawings of spiders in the late 1940s, while 50 years later she created the gigantic three-dimensional spiders, for which she has become so renowned.

Maman, standing at more than 10 meters tall, was created, for Tate Modern's first Turbine Hall commission in 2000, and was subsequently cast in bronze, steel, and marble. As Bourgeois has stated, *Maman* was symbolic of her mother, who used to



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weave and restore tapestries. With twenty marble eggs in its abdomen, the sculpture embodies ideas of maternal protection. Yet, the artist's relationship to motherhood was complicated and conflicting. Dominating its surroundings and teetering on rangy, segmented legs, *Maman* also evokes fear and suggests entrapment.

The exhibit is accompanied by a rich **program of parallel events** (theater readings, workshops, school visits and educational programs, members-only events, thematic tours), spanning until November and aimed at both children and adults. The parallel programming is made possible by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's (SNF) grant. The primary objective of these workshops, school programs, members-only events and guided tours is to facilitate a deeper understanding and insight into the work of Bourgeois and the themes it reflects, while also introducing contemporary art to less in-the-know audiences.

The program of parallel events up to June is as follows:

***Parabases*, the SNFCC Readers Theater**

On the occasion of the *Maman* exhibition, *Parabases*, the SNFCC's Readers Theater, selected three milestone theatrical texts focusing on motherhood/mother and the emotional development of humans, as the latter is inextricably linked with early life experiences. After Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, directed by Georgia Mavragani, and August Strindberg's *The Father*, directed by Maria Magkanari, the series will be concluded on **Sunday, April 10**, with director Elena Mavridou attempting her own stage reading of *Alcestis*, the enigmatic work of Euripides that balances on the cusp between tragedy and satirical drama.

Euripides, *Alcestis*

Translated by: Konstantinos Christomanos

Directed by: Elena Mavridou

On-stage musician: George Mavridis

Cast (alphabetically): Thanasis Dovris, Stergios Kontakiotis, Dimitra Kouza, Dimitris Lalos, Elena Mavridou, Nicolas Papadomichelakis

Workshops for children

Sculpture Workshop: Making Sculptures, Louise Bourgeois-style

In this sculpture workshop, children will seek to unravel the threads of Bourgeois's artistic life and create their own sculptures, inspired by her broader oeuvre.

They will be focusing on three important periods of her life (first period: human figures; second period: different materials; third period: closed indoor spaces). The sculpture



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Maman will serve as the starting point for every workshop, seeing as the spider was a theme the artist worked on for about 50 years.

Participants will get to know these different periods through pictures and drawings, the different materials Bourgeois used, as well as the symbolisms she chose based on the experiences of her childhood.

In this way, children will be introduced to her work, and, through a state of fragmentariness, they will create works resulting from their own emotions (fear, anger, joy), thus discovering a world where art is directly linked to life.

For children aged 7 to 10

On Sunday, April 10, May 8, June 12

11:00–13:00, Esplanade

Design and Implementation: Vassilis Gerodimos, visual artist

Workshop Support: Lydia-Elena Vairaktaraki, visual artist

Art Game: The spider who traveled the world

How is such a massive sculpture constructed? What material is it made of? How is it transported? In one piece, or taken apart in pieces? And how is it reassembled afterwards? Does it fit inside museums, or do some have to place it outdoors? How many countries have hosted the giant spider thus far? With what other significant artworks has it come into contact during its travels? Did Bourgeois always accompany her spider everywhere? When did Bourgeois make her first spider? Have you seen the spider in another part of the world? What happened once at the Guggenheim Museum?

An art game designed to present information about the journey of this grand sculpture around the world, while also helping children to become better acquainted with the work of Louise Bourgeois and the museums of the world!

At the end, children will build their own small-scale artwork, to be exhibited at their own impromptu museum, in their room or anywhere else they please.

For children aged 5 to 8

Saturday, May 30; Sunday, May 15, and June 5

11:00–12:30, Esplanade

Design - Implementation: Playroom (Ioanna Gouzeli, Aggeliki Bozou)



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Drawing Workshop: Guess what it looks like

In this drawing and observation workshop we draw inspiration from nature and Louise Bourgeois's *Maman*, as well as from a series of drawings/prints of the same artist that belong to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Employing natural materials (tree branches, stones), paper and colored pencils, we create shapes and forms and capture them on paper.

The workshop's aim is to familiarize us with the form of the spider, which will gradually lead to exploring our relationship with nature and our place in it.

For children aged 8 to 12

Saturday, April 16, May 7 and 21, June 4

17:00–18:30, Esplanade

Design - Implementation: Antigone Michalakopoulou, visual artist, architect, art teacher

Sculpture Workshop for adults: Emotion as a tool for large-scale artworks

A sculpture workshop revolving around large-scale artworks and how these relate to our emotions and bodies.

Through the work of Bourgeois, we see how large-scale sculpture surrounds the viewer, causing him or her to physically experience emotions, at times repressed ones: intimacy, fear, affinity, isolation, desire. Bourgeois's sculptures teach us something valuable: the fact that emotions persist, they surround us; and though it may sometimes be difficult to put them into words, they can be expressed as forms.

In this workshop, the aforementioned concepts are implemented through the technique of the scale model, as an experimental tool for expression of the form and a study of the large-scale artwork. Bourgeois culminates in *Maman* gradually, through a process of negotiating body and space. Participants of the workshop are invited to explore their own feelings through compositions that can act as small sculptures or mockups for large-scale works. The workshop's objective is to understand key principles of large-scale art through an immersive experience.

To this end, the workshop will focus on one emotion per meeting, to examine the inner self of both Bourgeois and the participants, in conversation with the artworks that will be produced. Fear, anticipation, affection, loneliness, and desire are the series of emotions that will take shape as objects.

At the same time, the workshop will analyze basic principles of large-scale sculpture, in order to clarify how an object can function as a small sculpture as well as a mockup for a piece of public art. Participants will experiment with a variety of materials, simple and



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pliable, such as textile and clay, which will be combined with found objects to create the sculptural compositions. Participants may also bring along their own objects that they would like to incorporate into the emotion-artwork they will produce.

For adults

Wednesday, April 13, May 4 and 18, June 1 and 15

18:00–20:00, Esplanade

Design - Implementation: Stefania Strouza, visual artist

Workshop Support: Elina Loukou, architect

To book a seat at a workshop, please visit snfcc.org.

School Programs

School programs about Louise Bourgeois's *Maman* sculpture at the SNFCC are inspired by the autobiographical hue permeating the artist's oeuvre. Following Bourgeois's artistic journey from childhood through her youth and on to her maturity, the workshops incorporate several artistic practices employed by Bourgeois over the course of each respective period of her life. At the same time, underneath her iconic spider sculpture, participants can hear Louise, as a child, a young woman, and an adult, talk about her thoughts and events from her life.

Concept/Design: Very Young Contemporary Art (VYCA)

Kindergarten–3rd Grade

My name is Louise - L. B.

From a very young age, Louise used to help her mother in their family business of mending woven rugs. What she enjoyed most was drawing the missing designs on the worn tapestries, so that they could then be woven with thread.

At the workshop, young students embark on a journey back in time! They find themselves in 1920 Paris, meet 9-year-old Louise and help her mend a valuable tapestry that has just arrived at her mother Josephine's weaving workshop.

For the purposes of the workshop, students will need to bring along with them a piece of fabric that belongs to their mother or someone else they are very fond of, since at the end of the workshop the textile will become a thread to form a collective tapestry.

4th–7th Grades

Fabric is a memory exercise - L. B.



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Although Bourgeois is better known for her sculptures, at the beginning of her career, and for nearly twenty years, she was dedicated to painting and printing. Her writings, just like her designs, are a collection of deep personal thoughts and memories from her childhood.

The artist used to jot down thoughts and images on countless sheets of paper, on the back of her designs, and in many, many journals. “You can withstand anything as long as you write it down,” she used to say.

Inspired by Bourgeois’s illustrated books, students become acquainted with mixed collage and fabric printing techniques, and then create a handcrafted textile journal, Louise-style.

For the purposes of the workshop, students will need to bring along with them a photo (childhood, family) printed on paper, as well as a piece of fabric that reminds them of something from their life or a beloved person.

8th–12th Grades

Maman is an ode to my mother - L. B.

Sculpture Workshop

Louise Bourgeois created her first sculpture shortly before turning forty. At that time, she first painted the “spider” symbol on paper, and then started to experiment with various materials, such as wood, clay and plaster. At the age of 88, she created the giant spider *Maman*.

In the words of the artist: “My best friend was my mother, and she was deliberate, clever, patient, soothing, reasonable, dainty, subtle, indispensable, neat, and useful as a spider.”

In this workshop, revolving around the sculpture *Maman*, students work on conflicting concepts, such as strong-fragile, love-fear, protection-entrapment, and construct a creature (real or imaginary) that symbolizes motherhood.

Working from inside out, both symbolically and functionally, they will first mold the creature's frame using galvanized wire, and then dress it with materials, such as plaster cloth, to shape it in the form they have imagined.

For the purposes of the workshop, students will need to bring along with them a piece of fabric that belongs to their mother or someone else they are very fond of, since at the end of the workshop the textile will become a thread to form a collective tapestry.



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For more information about the School Programs, please email schools@snfcc.org.

***Maman* | Louise Bourgeois**

March 30 – November 6, 2022

Esplanade, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC)

364 Syggrou Ave., Kallithea

Free admission

For more information visit snfcc.org / neon.org.gr

NEON is a non-profit organisation that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece, and to the firm belief that this is a key tool for growth and development.

NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place. NEON's space is the city. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces, and civic and social contexts. It seeks to expose the ability contemporary art has to stimulate, inspire, and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programmes of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

The **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC)** is an international, environmentally sustainable public space for expression, culture, and recreation, envisioned and realized by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). Designed by Renzo Piano and the Renzo Piano Building Workshop (RPBW), it was delivered to the Greek state and the public in February 2017. It includes the Greek National Opera, the National Library of Greece, and Stavros Niarchos Park, one of the largest green areas in Athens. In line with its initial commitment at the delivery of the project, SNF actively supported the SNFCC for its first five years (2017-2021), and in February 2022 SNF renewed its support with a new €10 million (\$11.2 million) grant to cover operating and programming costs for another year. The SNFCC is SNF's largest single grant to date, totalling €618 million (\$750 million).

Press Inquiries

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Additional information about the SNFCC:

- Current hours of operation:
 - Stavros Niarchos Park: daily 06:00–00:00
 - Central Lobby: daily 09:00– 22:00
 - Visitors Center: daily 09:00– 22:00
- Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the SNFCC premises: SNFCC-FREE-WIFI.
- The SNFCC has an indoor parking space for 1,000 vehicles. For more information and pricing, please visit SNFCC.org.
- All SNFCC spaces, including the parking area, are accessible to disabled persons and wheelchairs.
- Food & beverage facilities at the SNFCC can be found at the Agora, the Visitors Center, the Lighthouse and the Stavros Niarchos Park.
- The SNFCC has won LEED Platinum status as a Green Building, the highest possible distinction for environmentally friendly and sustainable buildings. The LEED program certifies that a building is designed and constructed on the basis of the principles of sustainable construction, using environmentally innovative practices aiming at energy saving, rational use of water, reduction of CO2 emissions, improvement of the quality of the internal environment, rational management of resources, and response to environmental impact. The SNFCC's platinum certification is the first distinction of that level to be awarded to such a large-scale cultural project in Greece and Europe.

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