

NEON



STAVROS
NIARCHOS
FOUNDATION
CULTURAL
CENTER

ΚΕΝΤΡΟ
ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ
ΙΔΡΥΜΑ
ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ
ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ

Athens, 10 March 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Contemporary Art Installation

A collaboration between NEON and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

Maman | Louise Bourgeois

31 March – 6 November 2022

Louise Bourgeois's monumental sculpture *Maman* (1999) is brought to the Greek public by NEON and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC). This iconic giant spider — one of the works that made the artist internationally famous — will be on display at SNFCC's Esplanade for a seven-month period, with free entry to the public.

Collaborating for the first time, the two institutions aim to bring contemporary art closer to everyone, while fulfilling their goals of revitalising public space and improving citizens' daily life.

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 2022 operations and programming.

Through her art, Louise Bourgeois expressed her innermost thoughts and fears, worked through problems, and gave form to her emotions. In prints, drawings, textiles, installation, and, most famously, sculpture, Bourgeois explored themes of guilt, fear, memory, motherhood, and love. Bourgeois's art was informed by her life, particularly her childhood years. She first made drawings of spiders in the late 1940s, and nearly 50 years later created the giant three-dimensional spiders for which she has become well-known.

Maman, standing at over 10 metres tall, was created for the Tate Modern's first Turbine Hall commission in 2000, and was subsequently cast in an edition of bronze, stainless steel, and marble. Bourgeois stated that the work was symbolic of her mother, a weaver and tapestry restorer. With twenty eggs in its abdomen, the sculpture embodies ideas of maternal protection. However, the artist's relationship to motherhood was ambiguous, contradictory, and complex. Dominating its surroundings and teetering on rangy, segmented legs, *Maman* also evokes fear and suggests entrapment.

Louise Bourgeois was born in Paris on Christmas Day 1911, the second of three children in a family that restored and sold medieval and Renaissance tapestries. Strong references to her childhood are manifested in her artwork, and from her relationship with her domineering, irascible father and the profound effects of her mother's illness and subsequent death. After studying geometry at the Sorbonne, Bourgeois changed her focus to art. In 1938, she moved to New York with her husband Robert Goldwater, an American art historian. In the mid-1940s, she made four now-iconic paintings titled *Femme Maison* that deal with issues of female identity. Around the same time, she began her first sculptures, the *Personages*, a series of anthropomorphic but abstract figures carved out of wood. In the 1960s, she created biomorphic, corporeal works made of organic, pliable materials—plaster, latex, rubber, and poured resin. In the 1970s—after her husband's death—and via the work *The Destruction of the Father* (1974), she reinvented herself as a pioneer of installation, an artform she explored further from 1991 until her death in her series of *Cells*. These disquieting architectural environments were filled with objects from the artist's past, alongside her sculpture.

Despite working as a contemporary artist across seven decades, it was not until Bourgeois was 71 years of age, when she was the first female sculptor to have a retrospective at MoMA (1982), that her work attracted mainstream attention and recognition. Today, her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Tate Gallery in London, and

the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, among many others. In 2022, an exhibition of her paintings will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

To promote access to the arts, the installation at the SNFCC will be accompanied by a wealth of parallel programming made possible by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's (SNF) grant, which will include readings, educational and school programs, workshops for children and adults, and guided tours.

Maman | Louise Bourgeois

31 March – 6 November 2022

The Esplanade, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

Free entrance

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

NOTES TO EDITORS

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

NEON

Melissa Emery | SUTTON

T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577

E: melissa@suttoncomms.com

SNFCC

Press Office

Marina Kokolodimitraki

T: +30 216 809 1140 (direct line), +30 216 809 1000 (call centre)

E: m.kokolodemetraki@snfcc.org