

All of the work in the exhibition presents an avenue into Bourgeois's thinking as an artist, at once voicing and expelling fears in hope of reconciliation or sanctuary. As Frances Morris notes, 'drawing was a practice in which Bourgeois sought refuge during periods of mental stress' and the *Insomnia Drawings* are especially 'raw in their intimacy', a way of keeping fear and anxiety at bay. Despite her own sense of inadequacy, Bourgeois was committed to finding forms for expressing what she encountered in the world and in her mind:

I have failed as a wife / as a woman / as a mother / as a hostess / as an artist / as a businesswoman / and I am 47 – as a friend – as a daughter – as a sister – I have not failed as a truth seeker...

New publication

Has the day invaded the night or the night invaded the day? Insomnia in the work of Louise Bourgeois, £15 (special exhibition price). Published by The Fruitmarket Gallery to accompany the exhibition, this book focuses on the themes and ideas in the exhibition. The book is illustrated with a selection of Bourgeois's *Insomnia Drawings* and of her writings, and also includes new texts by Frances Morris and Philip Larratt-Smith.

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Louise Bourgeois

The
Fruitmarket
Gallery

I Give Everything Away

26 October 2013 – 23 February 2014



Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) worked with an enormous variety of materials – from stone and steel to rubber and fabric – to make sculptures, installations, paintings, drawings and works in fabric. Curated by Frances Morris (Head of Collections, International Art, Tate) for The Fruitmarket Gallery, this exhibition brings together a selection of the artist's graphic work, including drawings, etchings and writings, all of which offer routes into her thinking.

Bourgeois began exhibiting her work in 1936, but her career did not really take off until 1982, when she was 70, with a major solo exhibition – the first ever offered to a woman – at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. From then on, her work attracted ever-increasing international attention, and she is now rightly regarded as one of the most important artists of our time.

Drawing and writing were always instrumental elements of Bourgeois's work, developing from her childhood spent working in her parents' tapestry workshop, and integral to her practice throughout her life. This exhibition begins with the *Insomnia Drawings* (1994–95), drawings Bourgeois made at night during an eight-month period of insomnia.

Bourgeois explained that 'drawings allow me to pinpoint and define my anxiety' – she drew to deflect the anxieties that were preventing her from sleeping. Displayed chronologically in the order in which they were made, the 220 drawings are serially arranged beginning on the left side of the ground floor gallery and continuing around the room to present a linear account of her sleepless nights. From the first drawing to the last, patterns, affinities and differences abound between the drawings. Some respond to the drawings made before them, while others stand alone.

Bourgeois used biros and felt-tip pens, pencils, ink and watercolour, and sometimes charcoal, gouache, wax crayon or chalk, and the paper she had to hand, including musical manuscript paper, and lined and coloured paper. Some of the drawings subvert their grounds – musical notes move diagonally up the page, escaping from their staves, and lines swoop out of their foolscap armature – but at other times no visual relationship between image and ground is apparent. Her imagery is playful and repetitive, abstract and figurative and sometimes in between, including cityscapes, seascapes and landscapes, mazes and clocks, interlocking lines, geometric and symmetrical linear forms, feathery and flowery patterns, and absurd meetings between caryatids and curtains, cats and shoes, bodies and buildings. Many of the drawings possess the consistent formal and thematic elements seen in her wider practice, such as her tendency to make pairings and groups of three, and her compulsion towards humour and darkness, danger and the absurd.

There is writing in the *Insomnia Drawings*, and the exhibition also includes a selection of Bourgeois's other writings which, although not contemporaneous with the *Insomnia Drawings*, nevertheless speak to them: *The fear of a fear will bring the fear / the fear of insomnia brings about insomnia / that fear of failure hits me suddenly and here is good reason to be afraid of it*. She wrote

diaries in French and English throughout her life, but verbal associations and lists informed by psychoanalytic writing dominate this selection. The writings date from the mid-1950s and 1960s – in Bourgeois's midlife when she was visiting a psychoanalyst on a regular basis. In her writing, she addresses desires and failures, depressive states, longstanding anxieties, and the fallout from everyday experiences such as a frustrated attempt to share a bed with her husband, and her longer term rivalry with fellow sculptor Louise Nevelson.

Bourgeois's interest in printmaking dates from the 1940s and relates to her interest in writing and making books, as a way of bringing together and ordering a series of images. The exhibition title comes from one of the large group of works on paper *I Give Everything Away* (2010), a suite of six hand-coloured etchings the artist made with the publisher Benjamin Shiff, along with the other series of five hand-coloured etchings in the exhibition, *When Did This Happen?* (2007). Bourgeois preferred soft-ground etchings, etching at home directly onto copper plates covered with a waxy ground; prints were then made from these plates.

Printed on paper with different texture and tone, the hand-coloured etchings in this exhibition were some of the largest Bourgeois ever made. Her exuberant markings in ink, watercolour, pencil and gouache come out of a bodily engagement with each etching as she reworked it on her worktable at home (too large for the table's surface, the paper spilled over it, rolling underneath). Bourgeois combined the hand-coloured sheets with sheets of text written in pencil, in some instances erasing the text to rewrite it. Both the hand-coloured and etched forms encompass intestinal knots and corporeal images, some of which resemble personages or natural forms and others which are more abstract.