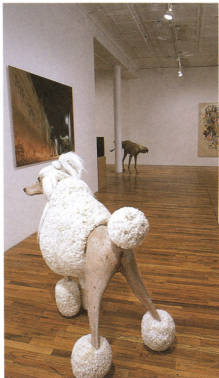


A black turntable is positioned on a light-colored wooden floor in the foreground. In the background, a white railing with horizontal bars is visible on the left, and a dark rectangular object sits on the floor against the wall on the right. The word "SALON" is printed in large white letters across the middle of the image.

SALON

ARTISTS SPACE



SALON

DENISE FASANELLO
JEAN-FRANÇOIS FOURTOU
URSULA HODEL
ALEXIS KARL
BERTRAND LAMARCHE
GILES LYON
NAZARETH PACHECO

WITH A FILM BY POURAN ESRAFILY

ARTISTS SPACE, MARCH 31–MAY 12, 2001

INTRODUCTION

Louise Bourgeois has held a salon in her Chelsea home each week for close to thirty years. Young artists, filmmakers, writers, poets and musicians gather to share their work with her and with one another, and to engage in a wider debate about the arts. For this exhibition, Artists Space made a selection from recent salons to show the diversity of the work and the wide range of interests of the artists who attend the Sunday sessions. Programmed as part of our Artist Selects series, the exhibition draws attention to inter-generational dialogue amongst artists, and the mentoring role that established artists play in the careers of emerging artists.

The work included in Salon covers all media and many themes. The artists are united by the simple fact that they have recently attended the Sunday salon, their participation stemming from a desire to have an audience with the icon that is "Louise," and the anticipation of an internationally renowned artist critiquing their work.

Using everyday materials, such as twine, wool, chewing gum wrappers and paper lunch bags, Denise Fasanello draws attention to human interventions within the landscape that are almost surreal. Labyrinths, topiaries, and wishing wells are produced through repetitive actions that free the imagination. These safe, "domestic" re-creations become loaded with a subconscious fear: nature as untamed force. Bertrand Lamarche works with sound, light and video to cause us to consider voids, specifically, spaces that are generally unseen or overlooked. Here, he creates a physical trace of the sound emanating from a backward-running record, a manifestation of unintelligible conversation that highlights the frustration of futile communication. The work of Jean-François Fourtou catches us

unawares in a moment that calls to childhood, forcing recognition of a nostalgia that is unrealistic and idealistic. He shows a deceiving playfulness that utilizes the viewers' uncertainties, almost subliminally causing us to confront our political and societal beliefs. Giles Lyon makes abstract paintings on untreated canvas that often resemble cellular structures. Made on the floor, his works often include detritus such as coffee stains, hair, and mounds of paint. Ursula Hodel presents a spectacle of narcissism, sensuality and coquettish self-parody as she confronts notions of self-image through a mix of couture fashion and various symbolic foods. Alexis Karl paints large-scale nudes of female friends against monochromatic backgrounds. The portraits, made with live models, are psychologically charged both in the moment of the session, and culturally within discourses of the power and vulnerability of young women. Brazilian artist Nazareth Pacheco was born with congenital deformities, necessitating considerable surgery—an experience she utilizes in the corpus of her work. She considers the body a site of both pain and pleasure, here creating fetish fashion that is impossible to wear.

—Barbara Hunt and Jenelle Porter

SALON IS MADE POSSIBLE, IN PART, BY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE HERMAN GOLDMAN FOUNDATION AND THE CULTURAL SERVICES OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY. WWW.FRENCHCULTURE.ORG





Spinning Webs: The Sunday Salons of Louise Bourgeois

AMEI WALLACH

Think artistic salon and you think movement. You think satin and lace grazing the edges of ormolu armchairs as the Marquise de Rambouillet makes her way through the glittering crush of the powerful, the creative, and the importunate whom she has enticed to the at-homes that established the form in early 17th century Paris: Corneille, Richelieu, La Rochefoucauld, Racan, Mme de La Fayette.

You think animated processions through Anna Charlotte Lynch Botta's Washington Square sitting rooms, as Edgar Allan Poe skulks up the stairs, and Ralph Waldo Emerson detours around Daniel Webster who is in deep conversation with Horace Greeley, or, for that matter, Margaret Fuller. And was that a salon at the Cedar Bar, or only a saloon, with all the fighting and bashing of doors?

The only movement in the salon that Louise Bourgeois has been conducting in her Chelsea brownstone for the past quarter century, however, is a disconcerting game of musical chairs in which no one knows the rules, and Louise controls the chairs.

The chairs are unmatched and uncomfortable, and interspersed with metal stools left over from her installations. They circle what floor is available to them, given the prevalence of old metal file cabinets; the bookshelves stacked with archives on one side of the living room; the daybed under a wall covered with pushpin layers of placards, announcements, letters; photographs on the other wall. Chairs and stools face the table behind which Louise sits, presiding.

There is tension in the room; no one knows quite what is expected of them. It is all reminiscent of the art Louise Bourgeois makes: the glass globes on chairs and stools, like chastened students facing the clasped marble hands signifying parent or teacher in the 1990-1993 installation *Cell (Glass Spheres and Hands)*; the massive bronze spiders of the 1990s, which Louise insists are nurturing, but anyone can see are probably not, however inviting some of them may be to the lovers who tryst under them or the families who picnic there.

Louise Bourgeois is the spider at the center of the web, and the young artists are happy to entangle themselves within it. They call her on the phone, they cadge invitations. Word of mouth spreads. Louise issues her own summonses to chance or old acquaintances.

"Come sit by me and tell me about your work," she says.

"No, not you!" The voice is peremptory: "You go to that chair over there."

The artists obey. There is a shuffling of shoes and chairs. There are other rules: one conversation at a time, and Louise leads the conversation. She asks questions. She wants to know. It is a flattering concentration of attention, particularly since Louise immediately gets it. She sees—more perhaps than the artist had meant for her to see—more than the young artist comprehends herself, because the artist is talking form, and

although Louise has reinvented the form of sculpture, it is process that interests her. It is the blood and guts of the thing, the visceral reasons for making art, and then starting all over and making it again.

There is something about Louise. People spill their secrets. They tell her about fathers who beat them and children who cut them dead. They tell her about sex and death, disappointment and self-hatred. It is the most natural thing in the world to talk about such things in Louise's presence; she expects nothing less. Trauma is her terrain, after all, childhood trauma in particular. She listens, and nods, and asks the kinds of questions psychiatrists ask to prod the confessional spirit.

But she is not a psychiatrist. And although she is incredibly wise, she is not always to be trusted. On her more irritable days she is capable of goading even friends to tears. It is as if her visitors were the stone she cuts, the metal she contorts, the plaster she casts to see what will become of it: to discover its essence and test what happens next. Expect perception in a Louise Bourgeois salon, expect sagacity, and the uncommon satisfactions that come when an artist of her iconic stature has the generosity of spirit to take notice of your work. But expect psychodrama, too.

The six artists whose work is on view in the *Salon* exhibition—Denise Fasanella, Jean-François Fourtou, Ursula Hodel, Alexis Karl, Bertrand Lamarche, Giles Lyon, Nazareth Pacheco—have all run the Sunday salon gauntlet and have survived. Louise suggested Pacheco's deceptively dainty lingerie, fashioned from sequins and scalpels, razor blades and beads, seemed "a little aggressive." Lamarche returned from a string of Sundays to rework an older piece, a Rube Goldberg contraption consisting of a turntable that rotates backwards and is activated by a string, as a commentary on botched communica-

tions. Hodel, whose videos are comical takes on herself eating in outrageous examples of haute couture, stormed away from a salon so outraged she was ready to rethink her admiration for Bourgeois' sculpture. Louise did not choose the artists in the exhibition; rather, she made recommendations of about twenty artists for possible inclusion. Jenelle Porter and Barbara Hunt, Artists Space's curator and director respectively, selected seven from her list.

The Sunday salons began as a way to fill the empty times after Louise Bourgeois' husband Robert Goldwater died in 1973. Every other day of the week she worked. The people she received in her Brooklyn studio were in some way connected to the work—curators, critics, collectors, architects, photographers, museum directors. But there were too many hours on Sunday with nothing to do. Once Jerry Gorowoy had joined her as assistant, counselor, friend, and ombudsman, Sunday was also the one day he had to himself. She was teaching and beguiled by the world of punk and youthful extremity; she went dancing at the Mudd Club and CBGB's. But you can't talk there, and she started inviting students and artists home to her Chelsea living room, where the floor is naked of wax or rugs and the walls have not been painted in decades. In more recent years, as it became necessary to conserve her waning energy in order to produce the audacious and dynamic work that keeps on coming, she has limited virtually all visits, professional or personal, to Sundays at home.

On Sunday afternoon, there is often someone at her side, her son Jean-Louis Bourgeois, who is an architectural historian, or some art world "bigwig," as Louise says, whom a young artist could not possibly expect to meet in any other way: Robert Storr, senior curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, who is writing her definitive biogra-

phy; Paulo Herkenhoff, now an adjunct curator at the Museum of Modern Art, who included Louise in the São Paulo Biennial in 1998. And there is someone else as well, recording every quirk and humiliation on videotape.

For the past six years Pouran Esrafilly has been taping the Sunday salons. She opens the door with her camera in hand, and she never turns it off. There are mikes all over the room. At a certain point Esrafilly pulls out the waiver form. You give her permission to use whatever footage she wants in whatever way she wants to use it. No one is allowed to leave until they sign. It is part of the deal you make if you visit Louise in her salon. Is there recourse later? Who knows.

Louise arrives late, sidling into her chair from the doorway to the kitchen on the Sunday when Barbara Hunt and I attend together. Someone has brought cupcakes, an inspired choice since Louise has a sweet tooth. Yves Doutriaux, the French Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, has brought a bottle of Pouilly Fuisse from Bourgogne, and there is an uneasy pause while Paulo Herkenhoff uncorks it and passes glasses.

After a while, Louise locates a pair of huge eyeglasses on the table spread with papers, pencils, books, a bottle of Shalimar.

"Did anyone bring work to show me?"

Inna Baunbeva, who is Russian and lives in Miami, has brought slides of her installations assembled from small ceramic fragments which she casts and sometimes stacks. Where does she show them, Louise wants to know.

"In Palm Beach," Baunbeva replies.

"Oh, Florida. You can't expect anything from Florida," is Louise's crisp assessment, and she turns to a discussion of technique and assemblage. Then she asks for a critique of the work from Brent Howard, a 23 year-old-sculptor who became her assistant this year after calling her on the



6



7

phone. Slides are passed around the circle. Baunbeva explains about one piece in which an iron wheel seems about to crush a circle of fragile ceramic forms.

"And personally how do you feel? You feel fragile?" probes Louise.

"All of us are fragile," says Baunbeva.

"Don't talk about all of us; talk about yourself," says Louise.

But that is something Baunbeva is loath to do, and the attention shifts quickly from her to a bottle of bourbon which Howard has been instructed to open. Someone asks Louise how her salon began.

From a movie by Louis Malle, she replies. "In the movie, you are supposed to bring your friends in, so the friends are all together, and then they do not get bored. So it is about not being bored."

Portraits do not bore Louise. She has a certain respect for the gift of capturing a likeness, and Anik Doutriaux has brought three paintings that arrest her attention, particularly the portrait of a banker, all in white, slouching dejectedly against a high yellow ground.

"Why does he not look at you?" asks Louise. "That is interesting."

She produces a ball of hot pink yarn and ties one end to a miniature ice cream parlor chair which her grandson has made from a champagne cork. This she raises aloft to create a plumb line and demonstrate how the painter has chosen to skew her composition asymmetrically. Usually it is Doutriaux's husband, the UN representative, who gets the attention, the portrait painter says. She is shy, reflective, and intimate in her assessment of what she does and what it means to her. She is all these things in French, which pleases Louise, who even after 63 years in America is apt to lapse into the language to which she was born.

"Very interesting," Louise says. "Let's give her a bravo."

Applause all around, a rare occurrence.

"Remember the woman who did portraits of herself in acetate?" asks Brent Howard, who has learned provocation at the source. "You kept telling her she hated herself. So she left."

It transpires that Sari Carel, who is a painter, has come to do an interview for Zing Magazine. She takes the hot seat facing Louise, and turns on her tape recorder.

"You have lived some of the major art movements," she begins.

"Now don't exaggerate," interrupts Louise. "What do you mean: art movements?"

But in fact Louise Bourgeois has lived through a century of art movements and led her share, beginning as an art student in France when she translated for Fernand Léger so that he could make a living teaching Americans.

"He said to me, 'Louise, I think you are not a painter. I think you are a sculptor,'" she recalls.

Because she is a sculptor, she dispatches Howard to bring her a lump of clay, and immediately begins working it.

"When you go from painting to this, it means you have an aggressive thought. You want to twist the neck of a person," she says, demonstrating on the clay. "I became a sculptor because it allowed me to express—this is terribly, terribly important—it allowed me to express what I was embarrassed to express before. It is a matter of gesture. When you paint you use a soft gesture, a caressing gesture."

And she wrings the neck of the clay creature she is creating.

At this point, Paulo Herkenhoff passes the Klondike bars.

It has been a salon as metaphor, a lesson in art-making as Louise practices it. It is a process which demands care and comprehension, disdains timidity, accommodates aggression, tolerates neither falseness nor self-delusion, and ends with an object to be experienced or consumed.





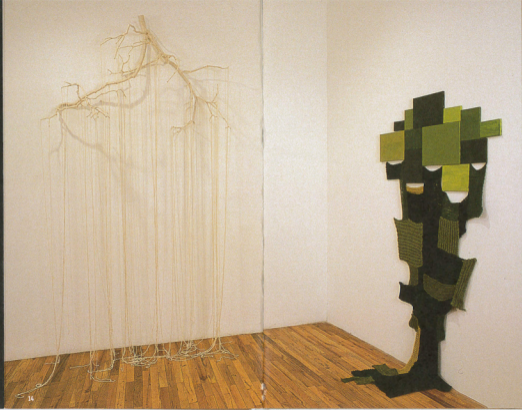
13



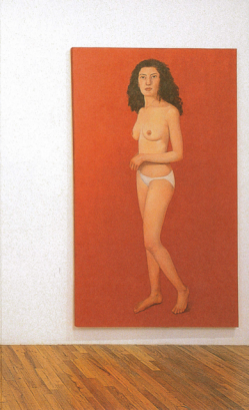
10



11



14





CAPTIONS

1. Bertrand Lamarche, *Untitled*, 1994/2001, record player, receiver, speaker, record and string
2. Nazareth Pacheco, *Untitled*, 1998, crystal and sheets of lancetar, 15 3/4 x 19 in.
3. Jean-François Fourtou, *Untitled*, 2001, paper, chicken wire, fiber and oil
4. Denise Fasanello, *Well*, 2001, paper bags, gum foil, light bulb (detail)
5. Giles Lyon, *Updraft*, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 77 1/4 x 54 in.
6. Pouran Esrafil, documentary video of the salons, 2001
7. Pouran Esrafil, documentary video of the salons, 2001
8. Installation view
9. Nazareth Pacheco, *Untitled*, 2000, crystal, beads and razor blades, 53 x 14 x 2 in.
10. Ursula Hodel, *Cornuto*, 1998, video
11. Ursula Hodel, *Eskiso Wimas*, 2001, video
12. Installation view
13. Ursula Hodel, *Godivo*, 1997, video
14. Denise Fasanello, left to right: *Hanging Branch*, 2000, tree branch and string, 108 x 60 in.; *Psiric*, 2000, oil on canvas, and yarn, 108 x 60 in.
15. Jean-François Fourtou, *Untitled*, 2001, paper, chicken wire, fiber and oil
16. Alexis Karl, left to right: *Emily*, 2001, oil on canvas, 78 x 48 in.; *Rebeca*, 2001, oil on canvas, 80 x 46 in.; *Michelle*, 2001, oil on canvas, 78 x 48 in.
17. Installation view

Artists Space

38 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013

www.artistspace.org