

After Midnight. Through the Seasons at the Montreal Botanical Gardens, Photographs by Linda Rutenberg, 2008, Verve Editions, Ltd., 128 pages

Dorota Kozinska

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[See table of contents](#)

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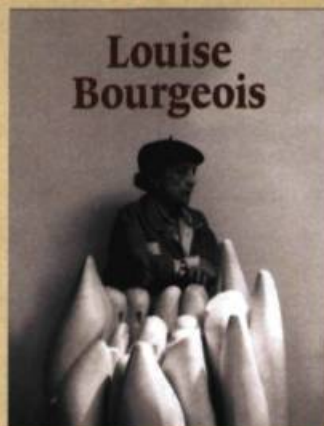
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LOUISE BOURGEOIS



Edited by Francs Morris
and Marie-Laure Berbadac
Rizzoli New York/Tate Modern,
2008.

304 pages, 240 illustrations,
hard cover

\$84.00

From her earliest installation *The Destruction of the father* (1974), including her dangling rubber *Legs* (1986), a version of which was seen at Claude Gosselin's CIAC, to *Maman* (1999), the spider, (a version is at the entrance to National Gallery of Canada), through to her installation at the Turbine Hall of the TateModern in London in 2000, Louise Bourgeois covers all the territory. Arranged letter-by-letter like an ABC book, with subjects and individual sculptures accompanied by descriptions, anecdotes, and facts, Louise Bourgeois is a comprehensive and well-illustrated book. The visuals and texts romp through Bourgeois' entire career. The letter C, for instance, includes the following: Cannibalism, calm, cells, Clamart, claustrophobia, control, colours....

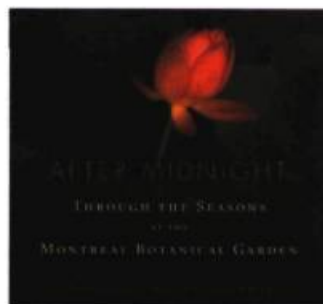
Louise Bourgeois was not disadvantaged, but she certainly was traumatized, and had a successful and domineering father. Her childhood was like a soft-celled, antique, angst ridden haute bourgeois prison. The artwork shares much in common with Francis Bacon, for both have surrealist tendencies, both are agonized, obsessive. Bourgeois met Bacon in 1951, while he was somewhat drunk, later recounting how much she admired the painter's "terrific brutality". Pleasant enough, Bacon received her as a potential client/buyer. Such ironic details inset throughout the book's texts make for a lively and exuberant romp through one of the 20th century's best sculptors' art and life.

Reading about Louise Bourgeois's early life provides us with some clues to her development and orientation as a mature artist. We learn, for instance, that Louise Bourgeois has an art gallery adjacent to, and in the same building as her father's tapestry gallery. A student at the Ecole du Louvre, she worked as Fernand Leger's assistant. Her first apartment shared the building with Andre Breton's Gradiva Gallery, renowned for its surrealist exhibitions. She was married to the American primitive art historian Robert Goldwater. Something of her husband's history and fascination with African art rubbed off, for we sense a primal intensity that slips into kind of bio-formalism in her art. Bourgeois's surreal sexual sculpture broke new ground. Her art can be compared with that of contemporaries Cornelia Parker, Mona Hatoum, for its strange admixture of domesticity, body metaphor, something that feminists seized on, though Bourgeois never identified with any movement per se.

These characteristics are brought out by the very visual and readable presentation of this book. The first woman ever to have a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1983, Bourgeois represented the United States at the 1993 Venice Biennale. The oppositions and tensions, and Freudian twists seen in Bourgeois's installations reflect a contemporary vision. Bourgeois's career and art, her primal, sexual, tactile confounding bodies and cell environments, and the abrasive and eroded ambiguous forms make her a master of intrigue well versed in the language of classical, ancient, and expressionist art, but not willing to settle for any of these. This book is one of the best and most comprehensive accounts of one of the 20th century's great artists, one that celebrates the look of Louise Bourgeois's life and art. □

John K. Grande

AFTER MIDNIGHT THROUGH THE SEASONS AT THE MONTREAL BOTANICAL GARDENS



Photographs by Linda Rutenberg
2008 Verve Editions, Ltd.

128 pages – full colour throughout,
hard cover

Bilingual – English and French

\$49.50 plus tax

Montreal photographer Linda Rutenberg has carved a niche for herself with her unique landscape and architectural photography, as well as her work using the infra-red technique. Her latest project involved taking nighttime pictures at Montreal's Botanical Gardens, capturing "sleeping" plants on film.

The result is a magnificent series of images that have become the subject of two exhibitions – at the Tree House of the Montreal Botanical

Gardens and Galerie Pangée in Old Montreal – as well as a hard cover book.

After *Midnight: Through the Seasons at the Montreal Botanical Gardens* follows in the footsteps of last year's publication of *The Garden at Night*, Rutenberg's earlier foray into capturing nature in its nocturnal surroundings.

"My photographs are about landscape and memory. They are intimate spaces, which reveal not only an expression of place and spirit, but also a testament to my passions and concerns. They serve as a means of rediscovering what we already have, and hopefully reveal, how much we stand to lose."

In her artist's statement Rutenberg lays down the motivation behind her creative process, and offers a hint of the other dimension her photographs bring to light.

It lies in the way Rutenberg focuses her camera, the close-ups, and most of all, her use of lighting.

She wandered around the darkened gardens, twenty-one visits in all, photographing the flora by the light of the moon, a streetlamp, and at times a pocket flashlight. Rutenberg used a digital camera for the nighttime projects, a major departure for this artist whose virtuoso use of traditional photography was her signature.

The images are simply breathtaking and otherworldly. Against a velvety black background, the exotic hybrid lilies and majestic yew trees take on a new persona. A delicate American lotus rising from a tangle of foliage appears to be illuminated from within, glowing with a pink light. A leaf becomes a cradle for delicate, withered petals resting in its centre.

Each season brings a new set of actors: Ostrich fern announces the coming of spring with its tightly curled fiddle heads, and summer sweeps in on a carpet of flowering gardens, its glory encapsulated in a

shining, shaggy sunflower, like a burst of sunshine. Autumnal leaves with dried, crumbling edges, a rose garden covered against the encroaching cold, are harbingers of the coming winter, that transforms the gardens into a monochromatic universe of snow, populated by barren trees that stand like silent sentinels.

Some of the images defy description, imbued with an emotional component at odds with the organic subject matter. A photograph of the Japanese Garden in its winter protection, with wrapped bushes resembling a group of huddled figures, brings to mind a silent procession. Two stone chairs with cushions of snow sit empty in the City Garden, their occupants long gone, a sense of solitude permeating the scene.

From season to season, each image in Linda Rutenberg's photographs becomes an allegory for the passage of time, and the inherent beauty in each captured moment, birth and death marked by nature in this endless continuum of life...

The book includes a poetic preface by songwriter Judi Richards, and essays by Montreal writer Elaine Kalman Naves and Gilles Vincent, the director of the garden. □

Dorota Kozinska

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