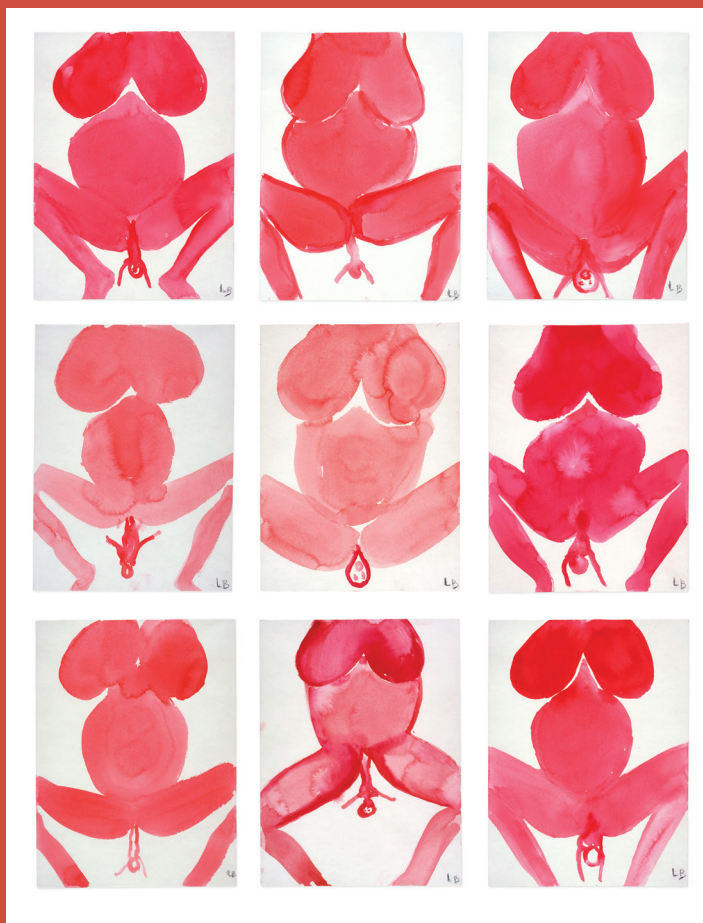


The Mother & The Weaver

Art from the Ursula Hauser Collection



22 September 2023 – 18 February 2024

Foundling Museum

The Mother & The Weaver is an exhibition centred on a primary concern of the Foundling Museum - making visible the vulnerabilities of children, their unseen mothers, and the importance of compassion.

At the Museum, the permanent art collection is illuminating; it shows how visual representations of motherhood have developed across centuries of Western art history. Here, the depictions of mothers aim to elicit compassion as a force against the stigma of motherhood struggles. From the symbolic multi-breasted goddess in Hogarth's coat of arms for the eighteenth century Foundling Hospital, to the romantic motherhood scenes by nineteenth century painters such as Emma Brownlow – all the works are deliberately emotive. It is only from the twentieth century, with artists' increasingly focused on individual expressions of self identity, that we see women depicting their personal experiences, often addressing acute vulnerabilities felt within their own bodies.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with the Ursula Hauser Collection, which has enabled this rare opportunity to see contemporary artists' responses to this vital aspect of women's intimate lived experiences across the galleries of the Foundling Museum. As an art collector, Ursula Hauser's approach is highly personal; she selects artworks that captivate and move her, often drawn to unspoken vulnerabilities. We are indebted to her passion and generosity in sharing these artworks. Our ongoing thanks to her dedicated team, Laura Bechter, Angelika Felder and Vanessa Rogger. Our special thanks to the exhibition's curator Tanya Barson, for her insightful concepts and thoughtful selection of works for *The Mother & The Weaver*.

I am hugely grateful to the brilliant team at the Museum, and my predecessor Caro Howell. In our mission to transform lives through creative action, we rely on the support of individuals and organisations, in particular, Taylor Wessing and members of our 1739 Club whose generosity enabled this exhibition. Thanks also to Hauser & Wirth for their support in kind.

Our greatest thanks go to the seventeen outstanding artists whose works comprise *The Mother & The Weaver*, and our visitors who are so open to the compassion that we all need to navigate life.

Emma Ridgway
Director, Foundling Museum

'I have always been deeply impressed by the way women carve a place for themselves. Meret Oppenheim once said that freedom is not given to you, you have to take it. And also that women have the obligation to prove that the traditional image of women no longer applies. I simply have the need to support women artists and open up paths for them to the best of my ability.'

Ursula Hauser



Louise Bourgeois, *The Good Mother (Topiary)*, 1999, Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © The Easton Foundation / 2023 DACS, London. Image courtesy The Easton Foundation and Hauser & Wirth, photographer Christopher Burke



Marlene Dumas, *Diagonal Child*, 1991, Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © Marlene Dumas. Image courtesy the artist and Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland

Introduction

'Why the spider? Because my best friend was my mother and she was deliberate, clever, patient, soothing, reasonable, dainty, subtle, indispensable, neat and useful as a spider.'

Louise Bourgeois

This exhibition takes the unseen mother as its central theme. Women who left children with the Foundling Hospital were themselves frequently impacted by poverty and exploitation and were often treated as figures of shame by wider society. They were also inevitably often the focus of longing and ambivalence for the children. Yet leaving a child in the Hospital's care could also be an act of love and hope – a desperate way of securing a child's future, in a world with few options.

This exhibition therefore evokes complex ideals and emotions of motherhood, childhood, sexuality, love and loss. In this exhibition, the work of exceptional women artists, in dialogue with the Foundling Hospital's story, becomes a point of departure for exploring female voices and identities. It brings together a remarkable selection of artworks, all by women, from Ursula Hauser's important private collection. The artists on display are drawn from diverse generations and backgrounds including: Louise Bourgeois, Sonia Gomes, Sheila Hicks, Luchita Hurtado, Maria Lassnig, Sylvia Sleigh, Lorna Simpson, Carol Rama and Pipilotti Rist. Many of their pieces are rooted in deeply personal experiences, addressed with remarkable openness. A number are haunted by maternal absence or presence. Together, they reveal the complex interplay between bodies, relationships, life experiences and professional artistic identity.

The art of Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) was an important starting point and her use of the image of the spider inspired the exhibition's title. In her work, the spider becomes a complex symbol both of motherhood and of creativity through the act of weaving. The spider is at once an image of her lost mother, a seamstress, and an attempt to reconnect with her memory in later life. It is also a self-portrait of Bourgeois as an artist and mother in her own right. Evoking this double theme, Bourgeois described the spider as a sculptor who makes artwork directly from their own body. It addresses the relationship between mother as creator and protector and child.

Bourgeois embodies the complexities involved in these relationships by representing the trauma of childhood loss in her artwork more broadly. She is an example of someone for whom childhood suffering played a key part in leading them to their unique creativity. In her work,

the burden of trauma is transformed into knowledge and empathy, leading to profound insights and extraordinary artistic expression.

Similarly, the sculptures of Sonia Gomes (b.1948) take forms that derive from her early experiences of instability. An orphan, she was cared for by her black maternal grandmother but later moved to her white father's family. Made with discarded textiles, her sculptures evoke the memories we attach to fragments. Through these fabrics, she addresses themes of parental loss, childhood displacement, gender identity and racial discrimination. She has stated: 'My work is black, it is feminine, and it is marginal.' Her forms nevertheless also suggest strength, and perhaps, the possibility of overcoming.

In each of the compelling artworks in this exhibition, artists explore the complex layers of identity and experience, perceptions of the body and female creativity. In the context of the Foundling Museum, their artworks find a particular resonance.

Tanya Barson
Curator



Louise Bourgeois, *Spider V*, 1999, Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © The Easton Foundation / 2023 DACS, UK. Image courtesy The Easton Foundation and Hauser & Wirth

The Artists

Rita Ackermann

(b.1968, Budapest, Hungary),
Lives and works: New York City, USA

Ida Applebroog

(b.1929, New York, USA)
Lives and works: New York City, USA

Louise Bourgeois

(1911-2010, Paris, France)
Lived and worked: New York City, USA

Berlinde de Bruyckere

(b.1964, Ghent, Belgium)
Lives and works: Ghent, Belgium

Marlene Dumas

(b.1953, Cape Town, South Africa)
Lives and works: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Sonia Gomes

(b.1948, Caetanópolis, Brazil)
Lives and works: São Paulo, Brazil

Sheila Hicks

(b.1934, Hastings, Nebraska, USA)
Lives and works: Paris, France

Luchita Hurtado

(1920-2020, Maiquetía, Venezuela)
Lived and worked: Santa Monica, California and Arroyo Seco, New Mexico, USA

Nicola L.

(1932-2018, Mazagan, Morocco)
Lived and worked: New York City, USA

Maria Lassnig

(1919-2014, Carinthia, Austria)
Lived and worked: New York City, USA

Anna Maria Maiolino

(b.1942, Scalea, Calabria, Italy)
Lives and works: São Paulo, Brazil

Carol Rama

(1918-2015, Turin, Italy)
Lived and worked: Turin, Italy

Pipilotti Rist

(b.1962, Grabs, Switzerland)
Lives and works: Zurich, Switzerland

Amy Sherald

(b.1973, Columbus, USA)
Lives and works: New York City, USA

Lorna Simpson

(b.1960, Brooklyn, New York, USA)
Lives and works: New York City

Sylvia Sleigh

(1916-2010, Llandudno, Wales)
Lived and worked: New York City, USA

Alina Szapocznikow

(1926-1973, Kalisz, Poland)
Lived and worked: Paris, France

Foundling Museum highlights

Emma Brownlow

(1832-1905, London, England)
Lived and worked: London, England

Foundling Hospital textile tokens from the eighteenth century

On loan from Coram/City of London, London Metropolitan Archives



Sonia Gomes, *Trouxa*, Various fabrics, lace and small metal parts, 2004. Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © Sonia Gomes. Image courtesy Sonia Gomes, Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York and Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland, photographer: Stefan Altenburger Photography Zürich

Acknowledgements

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The collaboration with the Ursula Hauser Collection team has been invaluable in helping us realise this project.

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Family Arts Manager: Anne Harild

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**Foundling
Museum**

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Foundlingmuseum.org.uk



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Cover: Louise Bourgeois, *The Birth*, 2007, Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland © The Easton Foundation / VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London 2023. Image courtesy The Easton Foundation and Hauser & Wirth, photographer Christopher Burke