

# Art at Vassar



WINTER/SPRING 2020

## Art Beyond the Walls



photo: Kasey Ivan

One of the great pleasures of my job as the newly arrived Director of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center is to explore the rich collection of over 22,000 works of art, much of which has been donated since 1864 by generous alumnae/i and other supporters. Each object reveals a unique aspect of an artist—and sometimes of its donor—as well as related histories that have often been documented by generations of students, curators, faculty, and outside scholars. Occasionally, one uncovers hidden treasures that offer new opportunities for discovery and greater appreciation, as in the case of a minimalist sculpture titled *Equinox* by the American artist Tony Smith (1912–1980). Produced in 1968 in an edition of six, the 450-pound, black-painted, welded-steel construction is comprised of smooth surfaces and symmetrical shapes that highlight the intersection between positive and negative space. It was given in 1987 by Marjorie Frankenthaler Iseman, Class of 1943, one of thirteen gifts of art that she presented to the college between 1959 and 1993. In spite of the unquestionable merits of the object, its size and the need to display it indoors seem to have contributed to the sculpture being overlooked for so long. As a result of the finding, the Student Advisory Committee (or SAC, a group of dedicated volunteers who, according to their independent Facebook page, “act as a passionate, thoughtful, and effective connection between the Vassar student body and the Loeb”) has taken on the task of researching the geometric work and selecting a prominent location for it beyond the walls of the Art Center.

During the course of the fall semester, in their effort to learn more about *Equinox* and to identify a site for it, the members of SAC consulted a sculptor, a conservator, the artist’s foundation, and other resources. They also formed different groups focusing on design, installation, and communication; prepared computer reconstructions and three-dimensional printed models; and sought the advice of various faculty and administrative experts. Ultimately, before the end of the academic year, the twelve students will unveil the work somewhere on campus for the benefit of their classmates and other visitors.

Tony Smith’s *Equinox* will join dozens of sculptures dating from the late nineteenth century to the present already on display in the buildings and on the grounds of the college. Among these, the most significant site-specific commission is undoubtedly the installation, along a busy wooded path, of 20 inscribed granite benches executed by the conceptual artist Jenny Holzer (born 1950) in 2006. Thanks to the Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, the backless, armless, dark-green stone seats feature verses by the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979), a member of the Class of 1934, that touch on universal themes one might encounter over time to create a metaphorical journey within the landscape.

In the coming years, we intend to seek additional opportunities to enrich Vassar’s visual and intellectual environment, and to promote this work we are delighted to announce the formation of a steering committee for campus cultural resources. For more specific details, please refer to the website of the Dean of Strategic Planning and Academic Resources ([dospar.vassar.edu](http://dospar.vassar.edu)), but in the meantime we encourage you to explore art currently on view outside the Loeb.

**T. Barton Thurber**  
*The Anne Hendricks Bass Director*

# Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting,

*From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation*

ON VIEW

January 24–April 5, 2020

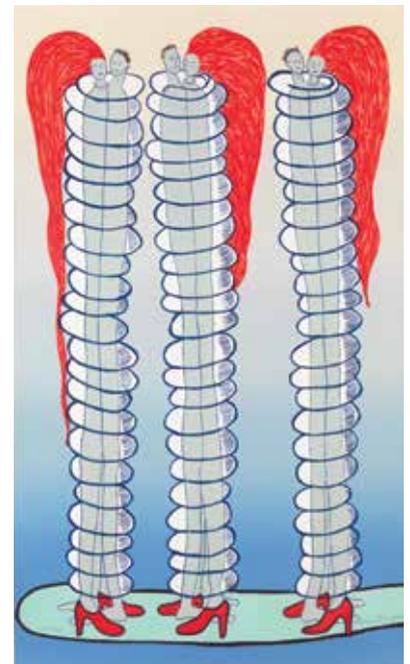
Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010) is one of the most renowned artists of the twentieth century. She is perhaps best known for powerful sculptures, including monumental spiders, human figures, and anthropomorphic shapes. An enigmatic chronicler of her emotions, she made drawings daily, and returned regularly to printmaking. The exhibition includes 87 works and focuses on prints she made in her eighties and nineties, with a few earlier examples and a massive spiral sculpture to give additional context. At this date, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College is the only venue on the East Coast.

Many of the prints incorporate or replicate fabrics, reflecting a lifelong interest in textiles connected to Bourgeois's childhood years in the Paris suburbs, where her family lived and had their on-site tapestry restoration business. Webbed, woven, sinuous, and spinning lines coalesce to shape these works on view. They are metaphorical containers for exploring the body, relationships, memory, and time—the major themes in the exhibition. These issues were of importance throughout her life and career, and they are especially palpable in these late works.

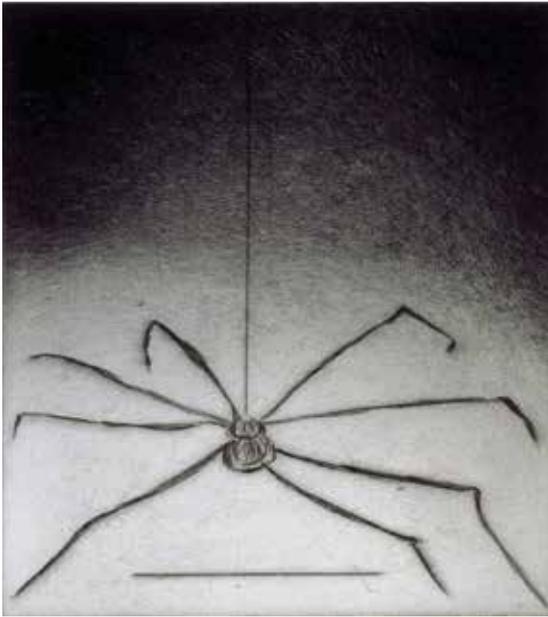
For more than 90 years, Bourgeois made drawings daily, beginning in childhood and continuing until her death at age 98. She made art because she had to, and described her practice as a means of survival, a lifelong managing of emotional vulnerabilities, traumas, and nightmares. As she put it, “Art is a guarantee of sanity.” Through the decades she continually transformed personal experiences, emotions, and dream imagery into a visual language distinctly her own. In fact, her approach to dream imagery has been widely influential on generations of artists.

Bourgeois's memories of her childhood and the deep emotions connected to them fill an ample amount of her subject matter. Born in Paris in 1911, she and her siblings were taught at home in the Paris suburb of Antony by an in-house English tutor, beginning in 1922. Living with the family for about a decade, the tutor had an extramarital affair with Bourgeois's father, a situation that affected Bourgeois deeply and haunted the artist for her entire life. In essence, she made much of her art to relive those emotions and thereby attain a sense of power over them. After her father's death in 1951, the artist, who suffered from depression, began psychoanalysis, ending her sessions for the last time over 30 years later, in 1985.

In the 1930s Bourgeois went on to study geometry and calculus in Paris at the Sorbonne, and then switched to art classes at the École des Beaux-Arts and with Fernand Léger, and art history at the École du Louvre. By 1938, she had met art historian Robert Goldwater (1907–1973) at her family's tapestry gallery in Paris, where she had a small modern art gallery. A scholar holding similar interests, Goldwater had recently written a dissertation for New York University on “primitivism” in modern art. They soon married and moved to New York where she studied at the Art Students League, working under Will Barnet in lithography, and where she made her early prints, followed by creating prints at Atelier 17.



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
*Couples*, second version, 2001  
Lithograph  
Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2006.290  
© The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA  
at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY  
Photo: Christopher Burke



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
 Untitled, from the portfolio *Ode à Ma Mère* (detail), 1995  
 Drypoint  
 Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2014.227e  
 © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY  
 Photo: Christopher Burke

Printmaking deeply engaged Bourgeois. She made around 1,200 prints, mostly in the latter decades of her life, but some in the late 1930s and 1940s as well. Early on she used a small press at home, with master printers often working with her there in later years. The artist frequently revisited themes and often worked in series, portfolios, and illustrated books, preferring their narrative possibilities. Turning to sculpture in the later 1940s, she gave up printmaking completely, until 1974 when she started teaching others about it at the School of Visual Arts in New York. In the 1980s she revived her own deep, personal engagement with printmaking, and began a very fruitful collaboration with master printers in New York.

The exhibition is divided among three galleries, with the body the first major theme and an enduring subject for this revered artist. The introductory room displays versions of the female body under psychological siege and a series of signature spider prints that are allegorical in nature. “The spider—why the spider? Because my best

friend was my mother and she was deliberate, clever, patient, soothing, reasonable, dainty, subtle, indispensable, neat, and as useful as a spider,” recalled the artist.

The spider is Bourgeois’s most recognized and recurrent motif. First depicted in a drawing from 1947, it appeared continually for the next 60 years in drawings and prints as well as monumental sculptures rising to 30 feet. *Ode à Ma Mère*, or *Ode to My Mother*, the name of the spider series, is a defining print project of the mid-1990s when the subject assumed greater prominence. Encompassing several meanings, Bourgeois most frequently related the spider to a maternal figure, her own mother, who was a weaver in the family’s tapestry restoration business.

The first gallery also features Bourgeois’s five prints of the *Crochet* series, where the resilience theme one sees in her images of the female body and spider has now been abstracted and reduced to symbols and shapes through the act of weaving, twisting, and knotting material. This interest in the building blocks of fabrics goes back to her childhood years when she helped in her family’s workshop. For the *Crochet* series,



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
*Crochet V*, 1998  
 Mixografia print on handmade paper  
 Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 1999.44  
 © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Photo: Christopher Burke

made in 1998, Bourgeois initially used red string as a drawing tool and laid it down carefully in a wavy, open-weave pattern to create a series of patterned, linear compositions and a representation of a woman's braided hair. For Bourgeois, who boasted beautiful long tresses, long hair on a girl or woman appears repeatedly in her work as a mark of strength and confidence.

In the second gallery, the body becomes the chief player again, though now there are two or more bodies involved, usually couples, but also a mother and child, and a significant amount of abstraction. Here in ebullient prints and a large aluminum sculpture the spiral appears as a prominent motif and suggests the literal intertwining and enveloping nature of relationships. For Bourgeois, the spiral was a signature element that could express a range of emotions including calm, security, tension, or even entrapment. The dangling spiral, as in the sculpture on view, could also relay uncertainty and instability. On the other hand, she often found the spiral comforting to create because of the methodical, repetitive, and busy actions of the hand in developing it.

The theme of memory features in this middle gallery as well. At the beginning of her tenth decade, in 2002, Bourgeois constructed *Ode à l'Oubli* (Ode to Forgetting), her first fabric book, compiled from her garments and linens that she had kept over a lifetime. The linen came from 60-year-old monogrammed hand towels from her trousseau. Working from one page to the next, Bourgeois cut and arranged pieces from silk, nylon, rayon, and other fabrics to form color collages. The original, unique *Ode à l'Oubli* is both personal artifact and a cathartic object of transformation. For the artist, finding temporary peace from plaguing anxieties was accomplished through making art such as this that entailed habitual handwork, as in other works on view. The unbound work shown in the exhibition duplicates that unique book, using vintage textiles, state-of-the-art lithography, and fabric-dyeing processes, and is a marvel stretching the limits of printmaking.



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
 Plate 7, from the illustrated book, *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*, second edition, 2005  
 Engraving and drypoint over photogravure, with embossing and red watercolor additions  
 Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2018.159g  
 © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY  
 Photo: Christopher Burke



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
*Ode à l'Oubli* (Ode to Forgetting), number 24, 2004  
 Book page, printed fabric  
 Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2018.263x  
 © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Photo: Christopher Burke



Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010)  
Untitled, 2004  
Aluminum  
Collection Louise Bourgeois Trust  
© The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Photo: Christopher Burke

For the rest of her life, printing on fabric rather than paper dominated Bourgeois's printmaking. The third and last gallery presents the sequential *Hours of the Day*, from 2006, a print series surrounding the theme of time. Printed on fabric with rhythmic bars of lines referencing sheet music, each panel features an abstracted, 24-hour printed clock pointing to the time of day, along with a title or saying, sometimes cryptic, sometimes confessional, taken from her diaries. Somewhat reminiscent of a medieval book of hours with written prayers for each hour, the series suggests that living in the past was a preoccupation of her time, though wanting to forgive and forget and live in the present was a real desire, as she noted on an earlier, related drawing for this series.

Honored with numerous exhibitions in her later years, at age 70 Bourgeois was the first woman to be accorded a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 2007, a full-career retrospective premiered at the Tate Modern, London, and toured to Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Solomon R.

Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. In 2017, the Museum of Modern Art premiered *Louise Bourgeois: An Unfolding Portrait* exploring the prints, books, and creative process of this celebrated artist.

*Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting, From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation* is organized by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Washington State University, in collaboration with the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College. Its presentation at Vassar is made possible through the support of the Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center Fund and the Horace Goldsmith Exhibition Fund.

### **Patricia Phagan**

*The Philip and Lynn Straus Curator of Prints and Drawings*

# Academic Programs

## Harnessing Vassar's Intellectual Currents

Variety is a defining feature of the activities undertaken by the office of academic programs at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center. The fall season saw a busy roster of exhibitions, programs, and class visits, that, while immensely heterogeneous, shared the common goal of employing art to serve, harness, and enhance intellectual currents coursing throughout campus in the curriculum and beyond.

The Focus Gallery featured the exhibition *Movement Captured: Dance in Art from the Permanent Collection* co-organized by Miriam Mahdavian of the Dance Department with the assistance of Eleanor McClure-Chute, class of 2020. An initial survey of dance imagery in the collection revealed that, of the many rich exchanges that exist between dance and fine art, those best represented in the holdings of the Loeb display twentieth-century innovations in ballet and modern dance that spanned Europe, Russia, and the United States.

Quintessential images of ballet dancers in *Movement Captured* included a sculpture by Edgar Degas cast after his death in 1917 and a lithograph by Henri Matisse published in 1927. Among the costume designs were prints after Léon Bakst for the *Ballets Russes*—famous for its unified costumes, sets, choreography, and music—and watercolors by Eugene Berman created for a 1946 production of *Giselle* (fig. 1). Turning a dancer's eye to this material, Mahdavian astutely noticed details that could be lost on the average viewer or one trained in art history alone. She observed, for instance, that the turned-out leg, tipped torso, and raised arm of Degas's figure not only indicate the artist's keen understanding of dancers' movement, but also evoke the dance tradition of Spain.

Also prominent among the Loeb's collection are works featuring larger-than-life modern dancers whose explosive creativity, beginning around 1900, broke the strictures of conventional ballet. One was Loïe Fuller, famous for performances in which the human form dissolved into fields of color and light as represented in a poster by Manuel Orazi for the *Exposition Universelle* of Paris in 1900. In the audience of one such production was another pioneering American dancer, Isadora Duncan, who appears in the exhibition in works by Abraham Walkowitz. In the early 1900s, he depicted Duncan obsessively in thousands of watercolors and "swirls" in chalk. While Walkowitz's renderings are composed of only a few lines, Mahdavian immediately recognized in his work the natural, free-form movement for which Duncan is revered (fig. 2). Another key figure in modern dance seen in the exhibition was Martha Graham, whose choreography was captured in gripping photographs by Barbara Morgan. Graham, who found in gesture a direct conduit to human emotion, can be seen performing in *Letter to the World* (her work that premiered in 1940 and was based on the poem by Emily Dickinson) with seminal dancer-choreographer Merce Cunningham, who appears to fly through the air. Complementing these images of historical figures were intaglio prints by artists like Stanley William Haytor and Seong Moy that distill the energy of dance into abstract forms (fig. 3).



Fig. 1 Eugene Berman, *Peasant Boy*, Costume Sketch for *Giselle*, 1946, watercolor and ink, Gift of Mrs. Richard Deutsch (Katherine W. Sanford, class of 1940), 1953.2.9



Fig. 2 Abraham Walkowitz, *Isadora Duncan Dancing*, pen and black ink with watercolor, Gift of Virginia M. Zabriskie, 1999.36.2



Fig. 3 Stanley William Hayter, *Sun Dance*, 1951  
Engraving, soft-ground etching, offset color  
Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd (Blanchette  
Hooker, class of 1931), 1953.1.3



Fig. 4 Photo: Bennett Fort '23

Accompanying the exhibition was a rich group of public programs co-sponsored by the Dance Department. One evening opened with ballet performances by Vassar students and was followed by educational talks and powerful performances by Marie Carstens, an Isadora Duncan dancer, and Devin Loh, a dancer with Martha Graham 2. The second program featured Adam Weinert, a performance-based artist and Vassar adjunct professor, who performed with Alex McBride the work of pioneering modern dancer and choreographer Ted Shawn. These dances—alternately heart-rending and smile-inducing—were the culmination of painstaking research, which Weinert used to recreate Shawn’s long-lost early modern dances (fig. 4). Then Emilie Gerrity, soloist with the New York City Ballet, spoke about learning the technique of Merce Cunningham and lyrically presented his *Summerspace*. The final installment of the series saw Alaina Wilson, Class of 2016, perform with her team site-specific choreography that she conceived for the galleries. These programs brought to life the imagery in the exhibition, and the juxtaposition of fine art with live dance produced an exhilarating experience for visitors.

Concurrently underway was the planning for the spring semester Focus Gallery exhibition *Metal, Acid, Line: Etchings from the Loeb*. The impetus for this exhibition was a group of visits to the museum by Christina Tenaglia of the Art Department and her printmaking students. Concerned with the technical process of etching and the diversity of effects that can be achieved, Tenaglia often selects for her classes works characterized by dazzling imagery and exquisite condition, but that are rarely seen in the galleries. To mimic this classroom experience, we grouped etchings based on categories particularly relevant to printmakers such as cross-hatching, texture, and movement. This approach resulted in the inclusion of works from Asia, Europe, and North America that range in date from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. Featured artists include Daniel Hopfer, Rembrandt, Tetsuro Komai, Kiki Smith, and Laylah Ali, to name a few. Viewers are invited to engage with these prints as an artist might—seeking out not only form but the marks that construct it, not only color but the value that enlivens it, and not only line but the hand that made it.

Behind the scenes in the Loeb’s classrooms, a particularly exciting class session held this semester was for President Elizabeth Bradley’s seminar *Science, Technology, and Society 384: Strategic Thinking in Global Health*, a course that seeks “to equip students with knowledge and skills to understand current global health challenges in their historical context.” This class looked at images of poverty by artists such as Rembrandt, Jean-François Millet, James Abbott McNeill Whistler (fig. 5), Dorothea Lange, and Edith Tudor-Hart. Close looking at these works provided an opportunity to consider both the power of observation and its limitations, particularly when encountering something new or unfamiliar. After examining works in the collection, the students had a lively discussion relating the questions that had arisen when looking at works of art to issues in the field of public health.



Fig. 5 James McNeill Whistler, *The Unsafe Tenement*, 1858, etching, Gift from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander E. Racolin, 1995.13.53

Another exciting day in the galleries saw the return of chemistry professor Joseph Tanski with his x-ray fluorescence (XRF) instrument for ART 130: *Art and Science in the Age of Leonardo and Galileo* taught by Christopher Platts in the Art Department (fig. 6). Having examined previously with the naked eye the Loeb's sixteenth-century Netherlandish painting of the *Crucifixion* from the circle of Rogier van der Weyden, the class devised questions regarding the chemical compositions of the pigments. One such query was whether or not the painting's golden tones were in fact made from gold. Using XRF, Tanski determined that the gold-colored portions of the background did indeed contain the metal, while the gold color in a magnificent robe worn by one of the figures was comprised from pigment alone. Applying this technical information back to the history of art, Platts noted that the artist's decision to replicate gold, rather than employ it, was not entirely surprising given Leon Battista Alberti's declaration, in his seminal text *On Painting* of 1435, "I should not wish gold to be used, for there is more admiration and praise for the painter who imitates the rays of gold with colors."



Fig. 6 Photo: Al Nowak, On Location Studios

### Elizabeth Nogrady

*Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Academic Programs*

## A Day in the Life of Public Education at the Loeb

As an art museum on a college campus, one of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center's main constituents is the campus community itself, with an obvious goal of serving the research and study needs of art faculty and students and a less obvious but just as significant goal of encouraging use of museum resources by faculty and students outside the art discipline. However, as an art museum that is open to the public six days a week and located in a diverse, densely populated region—a region with an ever-growing identity as a tourism destination—the Loeb views area schools, community members, and regional tourists as equally important constituents with their own needs. Through always-free tours and public programs and through access to its collections, the Loeb strives to serve as a valuable resource for the people of the Hudson Valley and all those who visit the area.

During the period from July 2018 through June 2019, Vassar student docents in the public education department led 120 guided tours for nearly 2,000 visitors, almost evenly divided between children and adults. We offered 23 gallery talks, 5 exhibition opening lectures, 3 professional development workshops, 21 musical, theatrical, or poetry performances, 5 family programs, and many other programs that defy categorization.

So what does public education look like at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center? Here's what an inquisitive observer in the galleries would have witnessed on one recent day in early December:



### 10:00 AM

Vassar student docents Magdalena Ramos Mullane '22 and Chloe Richards '22 discuss a work by Tanya Marcuse with a group of three- and four-year-olds from a local nursery school.



### 11:30 AM

A group of art students from an Orange County high school explore *Number 10, 1950* by Jackson Pollock and *No. 1 (Number 18, 1948)* by Mark Rothko on a docent-led tour.



**2:00 PM**

Vassar student docent Olivia Feltus '21 leads a group of senior citizens from Millbrook, NY, on a tour of the *Shape of Light* photography exhibition.



**5:30 PM**

Professor Emily Voelker (Vassar Department of Art) and Loeb curator Mary-Kay Lombino lead a three-hour professional development workshop on the history of photography for regional K-12 art educators, who earn continuing education credits from their districts.



**6:00 PM**

Vassar alumna Cassandra Currie leads participants in a “Yoga in the Galleries” program during Late Night at the Lehman Loeb.



**8:00 PM**

Vassar’s Asian Students Alliance celebrates the launch of the third issue of their magazine, *Portrait*.

## Curator's Choice

### Prints of Gee's Bend

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Africana Studies Program at Vassar, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center has acquired six prints by some of the most prominent artists of the community of African American quiltmakers living in the remote community of Gee's Bend, Alabama. This follows a tradition that began in 1989 when, in honor of the program's 20th anniversary, Vassar commissioned a work on paper from Jacob Lawrence for the permanent collection; the work, a lithograph titled *Memorabilia*, is featured on this issue of *Art at Vassar's* cover. For this year's special acquisition, three prints by Mary Lee Bendolph (b. 1935) and one print by each of three artists, Louisiana Pettway Bendolph (b. 1960), Loretta Pettway (b. 1942), and Loretta Pettway Bennett (b. 1960), were purchased. All six prints were produced by the artists at Paulson Fontaine Press in Berkeley, California.

Gee's Bend is a historically black community on a small peninsula of land just seven miles long located along the Alabama River. One third of the 700 residents share the surname Pettway, the name of the slave owner whose vast plantation occupied Gee's Bend in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> For generations, the women of the region, closely bound by family and custom, have passed down an indigenous style of quilting geometric patterns out of scraps of old cloth. Gee's Bend quilts often display bold colors and a dynamic, improvisational style that has been compared to jazz and is reminiscent of twentieth-century minimalist art, yet retain the structural patterns inherent to quilt making. Many of the designs that have emerged from the region are deeply rooted in the artists' ethnic heritage and have elevated common textiles, a previously somewhat invisible art tradition, to the status of fine art.

Mary Lee Bendolph is best known among the women of the region and has become an icon of American folk art in recent years. She was raised in the quilting tradition and first taught by her mother in the 1950s in moments between working in the fields and attending school. As a member of an older generation of quilters to learn and pass on the tradition, she has received much attention from the contemporary art world in recent years. In 2002, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, included her work in the pioneering exhibition *The Quilts of Gee's Bend*, which subsequently traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art. The curators and critics of that exhibition drew comparisons between the designs of the quilts and modern art compositions. In a *New York Times* review of the presentation at the Whitney, art critic Michael Kimmelman described the quilts as "some of the most miraculous works of modern art American has produced." He wrote, "Imagine Matisse and Klee arising not from rarified Europe, but from the caramel soil of the rural South in the form of women, descendants of slaves."<sup>2</sup> This type of comparison inspired Mary Lee to reinvent her style, intentionally merging traditional Gee's Bend quilting practices with modern art aesthetics.

In 2005, Mary Lee and her daughter-in-law Louisiana Pettway Bendolph made their first series of original prints at Paulson Press. That eventually led several other quiltmakers from Gee's Bend to create aquatint etchings on paper that are based on their quilted compositions. The results are large-scale, amazingly refined, multicolored prints that share an interest in geometric abstraction with the works of such modernist artists as Ellsworth Kelly, Josef Albers, and Frank Stella. However, their



Mary Lee Bendolph (American, b. 1935)  
*Get Ready*, 2007  
Soft ground etching with aquatint and spit-bite aquatint; edition of 50  
Purchase, Betsy Mudge Wilson, class of 1956, Memorial Fund in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Africana Studies Program 2019.24.2

patterns, colors, and forms retain a deep connection to the communal act of cutting and tearing strips, triangles, and rectangles of salvaged fabric and assembling them piece-by-piece to create textured quilts used in the domestic setting as bed covers for warmth. The original quilts were not only utilitarian objects but also served as gifts for special occasions and rites of passage. They also function as objects of memory, mourning, and family connection as the fabric used to make them was often taken from clothing of deceased family members.

Bendolph's print *Get Ready*, which measures 36 by 43 inches, is a vibrant, rhythmic composition that emphasizes the improvisational nature of the quilting process. Overlapping blocks of saturated color (red, blue, pink, purple, and green) recall swaths of fabric pieced together to create a free-form pattern. Abstracted views of the artist's back yard and other local scenes often make their way into her quilts; folk art scholars who have studied the community have suggested that the off-kilter grids in the quilts are reminiscent of the makeshift buildings of Gee's Bend. Bendolph's prints and the quilts that inspired them can be seen as a reminder of the lives the residents have lived over the years and as a trademark of the long-standing tradition of quilting as a reflection of the world.

### **Mary-Kay Lombino**

*The Emily Hargroves Fisher '57 and Richard B. Fisher Curator and Assistant Director of Strategic Planning*

<sup>1</sup> Amei Wallach, "Fabric of Their Lives," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2006, 66–75.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Kimmelman, "Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters," *New York Times*, 29 November 2002, section E, p. 33.

# Programs and Events

February–April 2020

All programs are free, and take place in the Loeb Art Center unless otherwise noted. Visit [fllac.vassar.edu](http://fllac.vassar.edu) for updates and additions to this calendar.

## LECTURES AND ARTIST TALKS

**Saturday, February 8, 5:30pm**

**Exhibition Opening Lecture & Reception for Louise Bourgeois: *Ode to Forgetting***

**Donald Kuspit, “The Benefit of Art According to Louise Bourgeois: ‘Art Is a Guarantee of Sanity’”**

Donald Kuspit is one of the most prestigious art critics in the United States. A specialist in modern and contemporary art, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, he engages all three areas with his writings and lectures. Kuspit is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History and Philosophy at Stony Brook University. The author of numerous books, essays, and articles, he interviewed Louise Bourgeois and has written incisively about her, especially from a psychoanalytic perspective. Professor Kuspit received a PhD in philosophy from the University of Frankfurt in Germany, a PhD in art history from the University of Michigan, and training at the Psychoanalytic Institute of New York University Medical Center.

Taylor Hall 102; Loeb Art Center Atrium

**Tuesday, February 25, 5:30pm**

**Belle Ribicoff Lecture: Pamela H. Smith, “Art and Science, Making and Knowing in a 16th-Century Artisan’s Workshop”**

Pamela H. Smith is the Seth Low Professor of History at Columbia University and founding Director of the Center for Science and Society and of The Making and Knowing Project. Smith’s lecture examines an intriguing late 16th-century anonymous manuscript, Ms. Fr. 640, whose technical and artistic “recipes” provide an opportunity to explore the intersections between craft-making and scientific knowing. Sponsored by the Art Department.

Taylor Hall 203

**Wednesday, February 26, 3:00pm**

**Kiki Smith: *Print Possibilities***

Kiki Smith has been known since the 1980s for her multidisciplinary practice relating to the human condition and the natural world. She uses a broad variety of materials to continuously expand and evolve a body of work



Kiki Smith, *Bird with Stars*

that includes sculpture, printmaking, photography, drawing, and textiles. For this talk she will focus on her work as a printmaker. Following the talk in Taylor Hall 203, we will move to the Art Center’s Focus Gallery exhibition *Metal, Acid, Line: Etchings from the Loeb* to discuss her stunning print on view, *Bird with Stars* (2005), printed by Harlan and Weaver.

Taylor Hall 203;  
Loeb Art Center

**Monday, April 6, 6:00pm**

**Claflin Lecture: Pam Lins**

Pam Lins is an artist based in Brooklyn, NY, whose work explores the space and connections between painting and sculpture. Lecture sponsored by the Art Department.

Taylor Hall 203

**Saturday, April 18, 4:00pm**

**Exhibition Opening Lecture & Reception for *Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican Migrants to the United States***

At 4:00pm there will be a reception in the Art Center Atrium and an opportunity to view the exhibition. Then at 5:30pm, Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey will give a joint lecture in Taylor Hall 102. Durand is a professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico), and Massey is a professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, with a joint appointment in the Woodrow Wilson School, at Princeton University (US). They co-direct the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), a binational research effort created



José Cruz Soria

in 1982 by an interdisciplinary team of researchers to further our understanding of the complex process of Mexican migration to the United States.

Loeb Art Center Atrium; Taylor Hall 102

## GALLERY TALKS

**Wednesday, February 19, 4:00pm**

***Blazing Saddle: Reimagining the American West***

Professor Mia Mask (Department of Film; Africana Studies) and curator Mary-Kay Lombino will discuss photographs on view in the Hoene Hoy Photography Gallery and how they reflect the relationship between Western films and the central myths of the American experience.

**Thursday, March 5, 5:00pm**

***Louise Bourgeois and the Master Printers***

Patricia Phagan, the Philip and Lynn Straus Curator of Prints and Drawings and the organizer of the *Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting* exhibition at the Art Center, joins New York master printers Judith Solodkin of SOLO Impression and Felix Harlan of Harlan & Weaver in a walkthrough and discussion of their collaboration with Louise Bourgeois.

Thursday, March 26, 5:00pm

**Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting**

Patricia Phagan, the Philip and Lynn Straus Curator of Prints and Drawings and the organizer of the exhibition at the Art Center, discusses the major themes and key highlights of the show.



Louise Bourgeois, *Blue Bed*

Thursdays, April 16 & 23, 6:00pm

**Art Talks by Art Majors**

On each of these evenings, three art majors will each give a 15-minute presentation on a work they have chosen from the collection.

**FAMILY PROGRAMS**

Thursdays, February 27, March 26, & April 23, 11:00am

**Storytime at the Museum**

Designed for 3-5 year olds, this 45-minute program welcomes young children (and their grown-ups) to the art museum using the familiar format of story hour. We will read a picture book, take a mini-tour of the galleries, and make a simple hands-on art project.

Sunday, March 29, 2:00–4:00pm

**Family Day**

Children and their families can enjoy a range of ongoing hands-on art activities inspired by works on view in the *Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting* exhibition, and child-friendly interactive “mini-tours” of the galleries will be offered throughout the afternoon as well. Activities will make use of several different art materials and techniques, including textiles and printmaking. Best suited for ages 5–10, the program is free and no reservations are required; participants can drop in at any time.



**GALLERY PROGRAMS**

Thursday, February 20, March 19, & April 16, 7:00pm

**An Evening of Poetry**

On the third Thursday of each month during Late Night at the Loeb, a featured poet will read from their work, followed by a poetry open mic. Co-hosted by the Poughkeepsie Public Library District.

Saturday, April 4, 1:30pm

**Slow Art Day**

Slowing down in an art museum offers unexpected benefits. Come see how looking slowly and long at just a few works of art can yield a revelatory experience that is vastly different from the usual museum hustle to see it all. Reflection and refreshments will follow.

**PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS**

Thursday, April 30, 4:00pm–6:00pm

**Educators’ Open House**

Educators and school administrators are invited to explore the exhibition *Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican Migrants to the United States* during our Educators’ Open House. Tour the galleries with curators and museum educators, enjoy food, drinks, and fun conversation, and learn about opportunities for students and teachers to connect with the Loeb.

**MEMBER EVENTS**

Saturday, February 29

**The Armory Show** in New York City is one of the leading art fairs and cultural destinations focusing on art from the 20th and 21st centuries. The Loeb’s curatorial staff will escort participants through the show’s wonders. Not a member? Not a problem. Call Francine Brown, membership coordinator, at 845-437-5237, for inquiries and reservations.

**ONGOING PROGRAMS**

**Late Night at the Loeb**

Every Thursday the Loeb galleries are open until 9:00pm, with special programs, events, and performances happening most weeks. Many are listed above, but check the website to discover the most up-to-date listing of programs as they are added throughout the semester.

**Student Docent Tours**

Every day at 2:00, student docents offer engaging tours of the permanent collection. Learn what makes the Loeb distinctive while enjoying a thoughtful dialogue about the art on view. At other times, inquire if a docent-led tour is available.

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**Opposite page, left:** Kiki Smith, American, b. Germany, 1954, *Bird with Stars*, 2005, published by the artist and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; printed by Harlan & Weaver, New York, Etching, drypoint, and aquatint on paper, gift of Lynn G. Straus, class of 1946, 2006.4; **right:** Retablo of José Cruz Soria, 1960. Oil on metal. Arias-Durand Collection; **Above:** Louise Bourgeois, American, born France (1911–2010), *Blue Bed*, 1998, Aquatint, drypoint, engraving, soft-ground etching, and roulette, Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2005.218 © The Easton Foundation/ Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Photo: Christopher Burke; **At left:** Family Day

Regular readers of *Art at Vassar* may be wondering why the Recent Acquisitions feature that normally appears in these pages is absent. The acquisitions list will now appear in an Annual Report, forthcoming.

## SPECIAL EXHIBITION GALLERIES

*Louise Bourgeois: Ode to Forgetting,*  
From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer  
and His Family Foundation  
January 24–April 5, 2020

*Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican  
Migrants to the United States*  
April 18–June 28, 2020

## IN THE GALLERIES

*Metal, Acid, Line: Etchings from the Loeb*  
(Focus Gallery)  
January 16–April 12, 2020

*Blazing Saddle: Reimagining the American West*  
(Hoene Hoy Photography Gallery)  
January 28–June 21, 2020

*“The Great Wonder”:* Violet Oakley and the  
Gothic Revival at Vassar  
(Focus Gallery)  
April 16–June 7, 2020



Daniel Hopper (German, ca. 1470–1536)  
*Kunz von der Rosen*, ca. 1515  
Etching  
Gift of Mrs. Felix M. Warburg and her children  
1941.1.52

On the cover:  
Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000)  
*Memorabilia*, 1990  
Lithograph on Rives BFK paper; from hand color-separated photo  
aluminum plates; plates destroyed; published by University of Wash-  
ington Press, Seattle; printed at Stone Press Editions, Seattle (Kent  
Lovelace, master printer)  
Commissioned by Vassar College in 1989  
2008.4

# Art at Vassar

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The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

WINTER/SPRING 2020



The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center  
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