

the third section, Janis Jefferies explores how group activities like cake decorating are a form of performance art revealing longings for intimacy and community.

The anthology's final section, "New Functions, New Frontiers," brings together Lacey Jane Roberts's thoughts on the use of queer theory to reshape craft's identity, and Andrew Jackson's exploration of the motivations of men involved with crafting. The final contribution is a transcript of Buszek's interview with Margaret Wertheim that frames the science writer's organization of crocheting circles to create models of hyperbolic space within the context of gender bias in artistic and scientific communities.

The anthology's contributors reiterate that the "nonhierarchical and decentralized" properties of the Internet and social media initially united craftivist groups globally and enabled conceptual craft artists to build community and promote their work free from the control and influence of boomer-aged curators, dealers, and journal editors dedicated to the preservation of traditional studio craft (14). While younger people typically take to new technologies first and push their use in new and often unanticipated directions, individuals of disparate ages, inter-

ests, and political persuasions today use websites, blogs, videos, podcasts, and tweets to form communities, exchange ideas, and sell goods. Black and Burisch in particular address corporate uses of technology to appropriate "alternative and DIY lifestyles" and then depoliticize them through the sale of "hobby commodities for affluent consumers" (204). Craftivism was a subculture that has been legitimized, historicized, and commodified by galleries, museums, and publishers relying on the very same technology for educational, promotional, and sales purposes. Stevens's Gen-X'ers are, after all, at ages 31 to 47, old enough to be established professionals capable of representing their own interests. Through this anthology, Buszek strives to generate "a much-needed dialogue" between the generations, because "many of the emerging, conceptually focused artists" have made "surprising, subversive, and poignant" work that "actually depends on and pays homage to the trails blazed by their predecessors" (13). Portraying the elder studio craft community as primarily either oblivious or hostile to change, Buszek, Stevens, and others warn that it ought "to pay close attention to this new generation of crafters or risk obsolescence, as those who would be

their successors are joining the fray of today's interdisciplinary and technologically minded art discourse—with or without them" (14). This anthology offers a one-sided conversation because, aside from Fariello's historiography, the views of the studio craft community, itself diverse in ages and preoccupations, are not provided. Also beneficial would be an expanded explanation of how the experimental craft practices of boomer-aged artist educators, fiber artist Ann Wilson of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for instance, have established a place for conceptual craft practices and craftivism in the contemporary art world. That being said, the anthology is a significant and useful contribution to burgeoning scholarship on contemporary craft. •

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#### Notes

1. See Howard Risatti, "Metaphorical Implications of Function, Material, and Technique in Craft," *Skilled Work: American Craft in the Renwick Gallery* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

## Louise Bourgeois: Conscious and Unconscious

by Philip Larratt-Smith  
Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation  
Publishing, 2012

Reviewed by Jan Garden Castro

At the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) gallery the exhibition "Louise Bourgeois: Conscious and Unconscious," on show for most of the first half of 2012, featured thirty works created between 1947 and 2009. One work that will remain in Qatar is the giant spider *Maman (Mother)*, first shown at the Tate Modern's giant Turbine Hall in 2000 with three monumental towers, *I DO*, *I UNDO*, *I REDO*.<sup>1</sup> The towers were not shown in Qatar, but the exhibition's curator, Philip Larratt-Smith, gives these

works new poignancy by discussing them explicitly in this catalog in the context of Bourgeois's other works and of the artist's Freudian self-questionings of her life as a child and as a mother. Larratt-Smith links *I DO* to the good mother, *I UNDO* to the bad mother letting her milk drip as the baby goes hungry, and *I REDO* to the mother's self-examination and redress of her state. These towers each have different kinds of spiraling, precipitous stairs, and various kinds of mirrors that reflect the viewer's persona through different, distorted lenses; they are ingenious, well-crafted art works that demonstrate how subtly Bourgeois's team has been able to realize her most ambitious constructions. I



Fig. 1. Louise Bourgeois, book cover with Untitled (No. 7) (1993), pink marble, 13" x 36" x 15", on two timbers, each 15" x 39" x 15".

recall them as being three to four stories tall; they are listed as 6,000, 4,500, and 9,000 cm. tall (ca. 200, 150, and 300 feet), respectively. Larratt-Smith calls *Maman* the fourth tower, stating that the artist was summoning her own mother,

unconsciously linking her fear of abandonment with her fear of death, and creating, as in the towers, a mother who is both good and bad (the spider eats her young). Finally, for Larratt-Smith, Bourgeois herself becomes the master spider, creator, and tale-spinner. His concise yet powerful essay contains fresh psychoanalytical insights into the artist's work:

Entrenched psychic conflicts condemned the artist to a life of repetition.... Thus art was at once an indication of her underlying psychic disorder and a means of making herself whole. It was both symptom and cure. In the place of Freud's talking cure, which she rejected as inadequate, Bourgeois found another "royal road to the unconscious" in the making of art, which she called her "form of psychoanalysis" (12–13).

The catalog introduction by QMA Chairperson Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani states that *Maman's* new home (since 2011) at the National Convention Center Qatar Foundation "has already inspired writers, artists and members of

the public here" (9). Her Excellency sees Bourgeois's spiders as linked to her memories of her mother; she adds that the spider in the Holy Qur'an wove a web that protected the Prophet from his enemies. This information further universalizes the spider and gives Westerners and non-Muslims added insights into another culture.

The exhibition title, "Conscious and Unconscious," is related to a slender sculpture with two sorts of towers. A stack of sponge-like white fabric shapes recall the spinal column and stand for order and the conscious mind. Nearby, on a pole, a blue rubber pear shape is pierced with five needles, each holding a small spool of thread. "The thread represents the unspooling of time, the sewing of the mother-weaver, the spider's web, the fragility of human relationships, and the tenuous linkage to memory," according to Larratt-Smith (15).

The dual language QMA catalog, in English and Arabic, is richly illustrated, and the cover image (Fig. 1), two life-sized pairs of pink marble hands clasped together, suggests closeness, warmth, and friendship between people and cultures. In the full untitled work, the four limbs stop below the elbow,

forming an X. The hands are a symbol or sign of human interconnections.

Other works in the exhibition range from red gouache "flowers," created in 2009, to a womblike, bronze hanging piece *Fée Couturière* (1963), to fabric webs and a fabric head, and metal and marble sculpture pieces, including *Cell XV (for JMW Turner)* (2000), a work in which water spirals together from two sources.

This exhibition catalog seems important both for the intimacy of its theme and for its range of work focusing on layered psychoanalytical readings about relationships between children and their mothers. This universal subject deserves more attention worldwide; it's refreshing to think that the exhibition has opened some minds to women's (and human rights) issues as well as to art that requires some thought. •

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#### Notes

1. See my article on the towers, "Louise Bourgeois: Turning Myths Inside Out," *Sculpture*, 20:1 (Jan/Feb 2001): 16–23.

## Agnes Martin

edited by Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder  
Dia Art Foundation and  
Yale University Press, 2011

### Reviewed by Vittorio Colaizzi

The impression emerges, through reading this anthology and remembering the work, that Agnes Martin's paintings are somehow not there. Their qualities and effects are of a second order, not directly tied to their material facts, because as perceptions, they evade and exceed these facts. Although it is entirely clear of what they consist and how they were made, viewers report constant dissolution and condensation of screens, veils, or mists from the tiny elements on the surface. Emblems of the less than absolute sufficiency of empirical knowledge, they

reinforce Martin's claim that "The cause of the response is not traceable in the work" (232). The question with which these essays grapple in light of these effects is: what could such phenomena mean? How are the artist's ambitions and conditions, as well as the conditions of the viewer, inscribed upon them?

Issuing from a colloquium sponsored by the Dia Art Foundation, in conjunction with a series of focused exhibitions, this anthology is, of course, a claim for Martin's importance, but at the same time, particularly in the essays by Rhea Anastas and Jonathan D. Katz, a critique of the very notion of "importance" as it is understood in the survey mode of traditional museums. That is to say, Martin's work cannot be placed, firmly and without reservation, in a causal chain of generation-to-generation influence. Although she is prized by many and her stature is likely to increase, it is

to her credit that she will never be "canonical" in this sense, because her work is singular in its treatment of gesture, scale, seriality, and image, as well as the complexities of meaning that are never fully independent from her persona and career. This singularity makes her an especially appropriate artist to be housed in Dia:Beacon; her work needs the luxurious attention that is less available when placed in a room full of obligatory heavy-hitters of either Abstract Expressionist or Minimalist generations. Because the opportunity to spend time with a sizable body of one artist's work is all too rare, this book can stand as a literary accompaniment to Dia's holdings.

"Literary," because in addition to its scholarly rigor, it reads almost like a novel due to the recurrence of certain themes. One leitmotif is the constant tension or conflict as to pictorial effects,