

Villa Medici and the Galleria Borghese celebrate Louise Bourgeois this summer

June 21 – September 15, 2024

As a complement to the exhibition *Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories*, to be held at the Galleria Borghese, Villa Medici presents two works by Louise Bourgeois: the installation *No Exit* and the tapestry *Sainte Sébastienne* in the Salon de lecture, exceptionally open to the public.



VILLA MEDICI

Louise Bourgeois (1911, Paris–2010, New York), a major figure in twentieth-century art who eludes all artistic classification, influenced many artists with a body of work pervaded by the themes of memory, childhood, and metamorphosis. From June 21 to September 15, the Galleria Borghese in Rome is devoting an exhibition to her, entitled *Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories*, which is being extended to Villa Medici with the installation, until September 5, of the large-scale piece *No Exit*, specially presented for the occasion in the historic rooms.

No Exit evokes the childhood home in which Louise Bourgeois used to take refuge under the stairs to spy on her father. The staircase imagined by the artist leads nowhere; it loses its functional aspect and acquires an almost spiritual dimension that prompts reflection and introspection. Two wooden spheres are placed on either side of the steps, suggesting a phallic form, while two rubber hearts hidden beneath the staircase invoke the place of love in human relationships.

The installation *No Exit* (1989) resonates with another work by the French-American artist on show in the historic rooms of Villa Medici, inhabited by reflections on the body and memory: the tapestry *Sainte Sébastienne* (1997), belonging to the Mobilier National collections and on loan to Villa Medici since 2022. This tapestry, woven by the Gobelins Manufactory, is based on an intaglio print made by Louise Bourgeois in 1992. It depicts a female version of the martyr Saint Sebastian, represented with great economy of means: a body with generous curves is riddled with black arrows from all sides. Bourgeois hijacks the traditional iconography of the Christian martyr to evoke her personal sufferings. “*Sainte Sébastienne* is a self-portrait,” she declared.

The two works by Louise Bourgeois are presented in the Salon de lecture. This salon, refurbished in 2022 by Kim Jones and Silvia Venturini Fendi, will be exceptionally accessible to the public for the occasion.

On the exhibition *Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories* at the Galleria Borghese:

The exhibition, organized by the Galleria Borghese in collaboration with The Easton Foundation, is the artist’s first retrospective in Rome. Curated by Cloé Perrone, Geraldine Leardi, and Philip Larratt-Smith, it presents some twenty works and invites visitors to explore Louise Bourgeois’s major contribution to twentieth-century sculpture, in conjunction with the historical collections and architectural heritage of the Galleria Borghese.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue and a guide published by Marsilio Arte.

Curators: Cloé Perrone, Geraldine Leardi, and Philip Larratt-Smith.

Exhibition held in collaboration with The Easton Foundation.

Exhibition Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories at the Galleria Borghese: June 21 - September 15, 2024

No Exit and *Sainte Sébastienne* at Villa Medici: June 21 to September 5, 2024

Practical information of the French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici

Open Monday to Sunday, closed Tuesdays

10 am - 6.30 pm

Exhibition tickets: €10 full price, €8 reduced price

Free admission for journalists on presentation of a valid press card.

Around the exhibition at Villa Medici

On July 4, as part of the *Esistere come Donna* program of encounters accompanying the exhibition *Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories*, Villa Medici will welcome artist and friend of Louise Bourgeois Mâkhi Xenakis and author Laura Accerboni for a free conference entitled *Tenendo per mano l'ombra. Philosophy and poetry, around the exhibition Louise Bourgeois. Unconscious memories.*

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici:



Founded in 1666 by King Louis XIV, it is a French institution that has been housed since 1803 at Villa Medici, a 16th-century villa surrounded by a seven-hectare park on Mount Pincio in the heart of Rome. A national public institution under the authority of the French Ministry of Culture, it fulfills three complementary missions: to welcome artists, creators, and art historians of the highest caliber in residency for long stays of one year or more; to set up a cultural and artistic program that integrates all fields of the arts and creation aimed at a broad public; to conserve, restore, study, and make its built and landscape heritage, as well as its collections, known to the public.

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici is directed by Sam Stourdzé.

The Galleria Borghese



The Galleria Borghese houses and exhibits an important collection of ancient sculptures, bas-reliefs and mosaics, as well as paintings and sculptures from the 15th to the 19th century. Among the masterpieces in the collection, whose first and most important nucleus dates back to the collection of Cardinal Scipione (1579-1633), nephew of Pope Paul V, are works by Caravaggio, Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Antonello da Messina, Giovanni Bellini and sculptures by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Canova.

The Villa Borghese, in which the Galleria is housed, originated in the early 17th century around the family's first estate, to which other lands were gradually annexed until an immense park was created. The rapid rise of the Borghese family, originally from Siena in Tuscany, in the Roman context culminated in the election of Camillo (1605-1621) as pontiff who, under the name of Paul V, launched the great season of urban interventions and extraordinary collecting ventures

with the help of his favorite nephew, the absolute protagonist of this scenario, as well as the diplomatic and ceremonial representation of the papal court: Cardinal Scipione Caffarelli Borghese.

The presentation of Louise Bourgeois at Villa Medici benefits from an exceptional loan from the Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création, Paris, for the work *No Exit. Sainte Sébastienne* is on deposit with the Mobilier national as part of the *Re-enchanting Villa Medici*.

The French Academy in Rome – Villa Medici is an establishment of the French Ministry of Culture.



VILLA MEDICI
**ACADÉMIE DE
FRANCE À ROME**

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Images credits in the press release:

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Left: Louise Bourgeois, *No Exit*, 1989, Wood, painted metal and rubber, 209.5 x 213.3 x 243.8 cm, Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la Création, Paris.

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Right: Louise Bourgeois, *Sainte Sébastienne*, 1997, lice tapestry, textile, wool, 338 x 245 cm, Manufacture des Gobelins, Collection of the Mobilier national on deposit at Villa Medici.

Photo: Agostino Osio

Page 4: view of the Villa Medici. Photo: Sebastiano Luciano.