

Moi, non-moi

June 5–July 27, 2018

Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010, France)

Maria Lassnig (1919–2014, Austria)

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908–1992, Portugal)

Curator Amer Abbas

Vartai gallery is proud to present *Moi, non-moi* featuring the world-class artists Louise Bourgeois, Maria Lassnig and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva who have never previously been exhibited in the Baltics. These artists are among the most influential female artists of our times and their works have been shown and are in the collections of the world's biggest and important art museums and their names already to be found in numerous art books.

The show, organized in collaboration with the Maria Lassnig Foundation (Vienna), Árpád Szenes-Vieira da Silva Foundation (Lisbon) and the Louise Bourgeois studio, consists of more than 50 works. Although all three artists are mostly known for their paintings (M. Lassnig and M. Vieira da Silva) and sculptures and installations (L. Bourgeois), the curator of this show Amer Abbas suggests taking a closer look at their drawings. The drawings are not only the formal continuation of their painting and sculpture, but also the gesture of an emancipated personal language that served them as way to express their innermost thoughts and feelings.

The show is titled 'Moi, non-moi' - a term coined by French-Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who was reflecting the human condition of being oneself and at the same time having otherness too. The drawings create a place for a performative 'non-moi', where an artistic I and just I meet. The possibility to draw anywhere and at any time, allowed drawings to function as a diary, which reflects artistic ambition and vision, as well as personal, intimate experiences. Louise Bourgeois once said: 'I draw at night, in bed, leaning against the pillows. There may be some music playing. Otherwise I just listen to the drone of traffic on the street. I store my illustrated journals very carefully. They relax me and help me fall asleep [...] Drawings are "feather-thought" – ideas that I catch in the air and commit to paper. All of my thoughts are visual.'

Drawings are a self-reflective art, having directness and immediacy in itself, thus there are no adaptations and no self-censorship. The artists are being true to themselves, as well as to the viewers. All three artists use the same language – a simple line to talk about different, though sometimes overlapping themes. This language of theirs made them among the best-known artists in the world and very much reflects their unique way of thinking and creating.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was a French-Portuguese abstractionist painter, balancing between abstract and representational painting. Vieira da Silva was the first woman to receive the French government's Grand Prix National des Arts (1966) and she was also named a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (1979). The works of the artist have been exhibited at the Guggenheim in New York City, Kunsthalle Basel, the Turin City Museum and Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, as well as other well-known museums and institutions.

Maria Lassnig's career was particularly complicated. Her works received recognition only at the very end of her life. Nonetheless, Lassnig has left her mark on a number of artistic developments, since she is regarded as one of the founders of art informel in Austria and a pioneer of female emancipation in a world of art dominated by men. Her visionary work has had a great influence on subsequent generations of artists. M. Lassnig had her solo shows in such venues as MOMA PS1, the Pompidou Centre, Stedelijk Museum, as well as many other museums and galleries. The resonance of Lassnig's work was also reflected in her being awarded the international Roswitha Haftmann Prize in 2002 and the Austrian Decoration for Science and Art in 2005. It culminated in her receiving the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2013.

Just like M. Lassnig, French artist Louise Bourgeois was internationally recognized only in the eighth decade of her life, but now she is among the best-known artists in the world. Using the body as a primary form, Bourgeois explored the full range of the human condition. Memory, sexuality, love and abandonment are the core of her complex body of work. Bourgeois's work appears in collections worldwide and the artist represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, won a National Medal of Arts (1997), a Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale (1999) and a National Order of the Legion of Honour (2008) among many other awards. Her works have been exhibited at Tate Modern in Bilbao, the Guggenheim in New York City, the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, as well as other museums throughout the world.

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