



SEEING RED

BRIONY FER

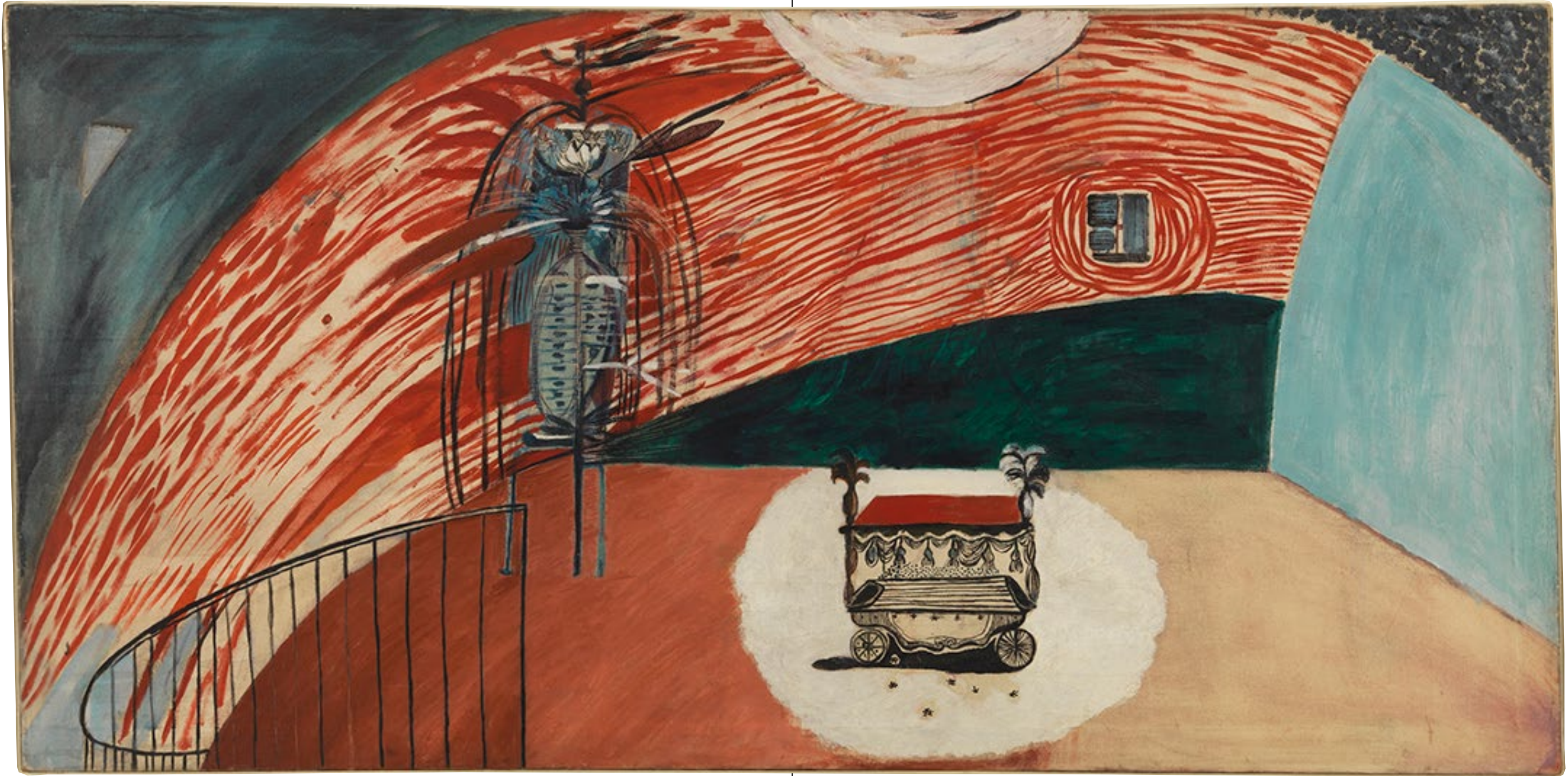
It is not uncommon for sculptors to start off as painters or for artists to lay out a set of motifs early on to which they will constantly return in later work. Painting preoccupied Louise Bourgeois for the first ten years of her life as an artist, and by the time she gave it up for sculpture many of her characteristic subjects had already crystallized. According to Deborah Wye, the artist called the paintings that she made in this period “nostalgia pictures.”¹ While the term might sound negative to a contemporary ear, as if she were dismissing them for their depiction of longing for a lost time and place, I think nostalgia offered Bourgeois a way to be an ambivalent modernist, which was the only kind that she could be. After all, looking back in order to look ahead was a driving force of her work. Brought into focus, rather than seen as a preamble to what came later, her painting practice reveals its own logic, both tied to the new pictorial forms emerging in New York and steeped in European modernism.



New Orleans, 1946



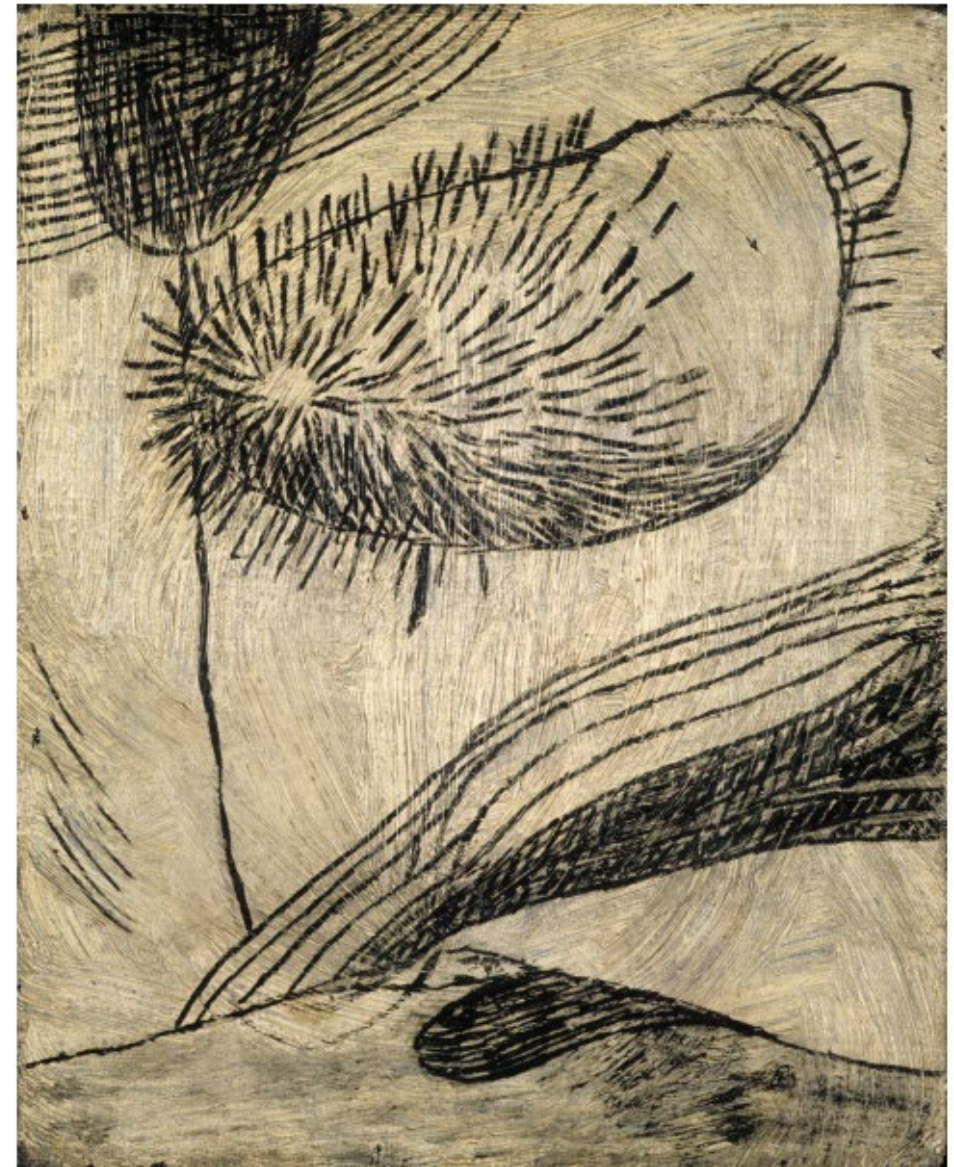
Reparation, 1945



"1932", 1947



Untitled, 1948



Untitled, ca. 1947

CHRONOLOGY

CLARE DAVIES

1911

Louise Joséphine Bourgeois is born in Paris on December 25 to Joséphine Valérie Fauriaux and Louis Isadore Bourgeois. She arrives after her sister, Henriette (1904), and before her brother, Pierre (1913). Joséphine comes from a family of dealers and restorers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tapestries, a tradition Bourgeois's parents maintain. Her father (originally trained as a landscape architect) takes over the Maison Fauriaux in 1910 and establishes a gallery, Maison Louis Bourgeois, at 174 boulevard Saint-Germain. The family lives next door, at no. 172, above the Café de Flore.



FAR LEFT
Louise Bourgeois's mother,
Joséphine Fauriaux, in the tapestry
gallery, ca. 1911

LEFT
Bourgeois and her parents,
Joséphine and Louis, in 1915