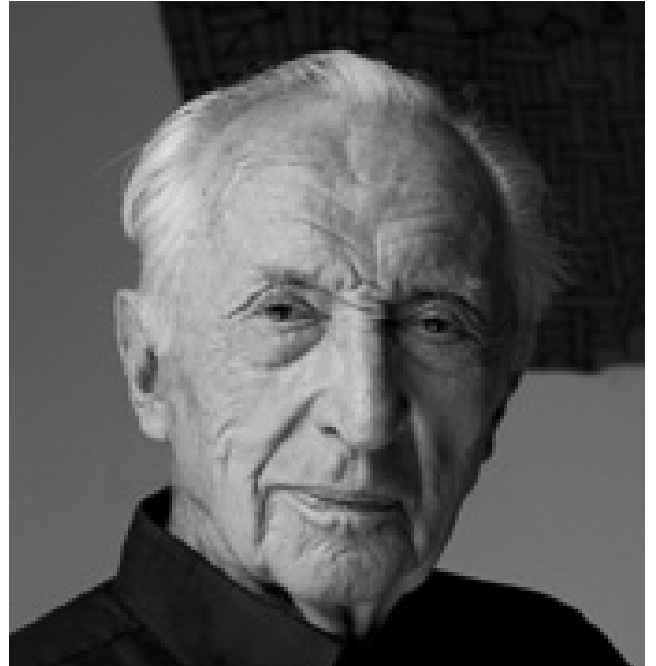


DIANE DE POLIGNAC

PIERRE SOULAGES (1919)



Pierre Soulages is a French painter known for his use of the colour black. Soulages was one of the pioneers of the Lyrical Abstraction movement, alongside Hans Hartung and Gérard Schneider.

BIOGRAPHY

THE PAINTER PIERRE SOULAGES' EARLY LIFE AND ARTISTIC TRAINING

Pierre Soulages was born on 24 December 1919 in Rodez, France. Soulages developed a fascination for Romanesque art and prehistoric times from an early age. Particularly fond of studying photos of the Lascaux caves, he was also enthralled by the engraved menhirs exhibited at the Fenaille Museum in his native town, as well as the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques. It was on a visit to the latter that he decided to become a painter. Soulages' first paintings were of snowy landscapes. "What I wanted to do with my ink," he said, "was to make the white of the paper even whiter, brighter, like snow. At least that's the explanation I'm giving now." Soulages also painted black, leafless trees, which contrasted with the white background of the paper.

At the age of 18 years old, Pierre Soulages moved to Paris to study at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Finding the teaching too conformist, however, he decided to return to Rodez. During his stay in Paris, Soulages visited the Musée du Louvre and discovered the works of Cézanne and Picasso, which were a revelation to him.

Pierre Soulages was posted to Montpellier in 1941. Attending the city's École des Beaux-Arts, the painter met Colette Llaurens, whom he married later that same year. While in Montpellier, Soulages regularly visited the Musée Fabre. Soulages spent the rest of the war working as a labourer for winegrowers in the region. It was during this period that he met Sonia Delaunay, who introduced him to abstract painting.

THE PAINTER PIERRE SOULAGES' EARLY CAREER

In 1946, after the end of the war, Soulages dedicated himself fully to painting. He set up his studio in the Parisian suburb of Courbevoie and began creating his first abstract works: charcoal drawings, inks and paintings made using walnut stain. Pierre Soulages submitted his new works to be included at the Salon d'Automne exhibition in 1946, but they were rejected. The following year, his work was exhibited at the Salon des Surindépendants, where he met the painters Francis Picabia and Hans Hartung.

In 1948, Soulages moved his studio to Paris' Montparnasse neighbourhood. Featured in the third Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in the same year, his work was discovered by O. Domnick, who was working on preparations for the *Französischer abstrakter Malerei* exhibition at the time. The first exhibition of abstract art to be held in Germany since the end of the war, the show was a milestone in art history. It toured Germany, travelling to Stuttgart, Munich,

Düsseldorf, Hanover, Frankfurt, Kassel, Wuppertal and Hamburg. At this landmark event, the young artist's works were exhibited alongside those of the pioneers of abstraction, including Francis Bott, Félix Del Marle, César Domela, Hans Hartung, Auguste Herbin, Frantisek Kupka, Jean Piaubert, Gérard Schneider and Jean Villeri.

In Paris, Pierre Soulages took part in the *Prises de terre* exhibition at the Galerie Breteau, which confronted abstract painters with their surrealist counterparts. Soulages met the painter Jean-Michel Atlan, as well as the curator of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, James Johnson Sweeney, who took an interest in his paintings.

Pierre Soulages' first solo exhibition was presented in Paris in 1949 at the Galerie Lydia Conti—the same gallery that had organised Hans Hartung and Gérard Schneider's first solo exhibitions two years earlier.

THE INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS OF PIERRE SOULAGES' WORK

The painter Pierre Soulages was invited to take part in the Salon de Mai in Paris for the first time in 1949 and was subsequently represented at the Salon every year until 1957. Soulages' works were also featured as part of the *Peintures et sculptures abstraites* exhibition at the Galerie Colette Allendy in Paris, where they were exhibited alongside artworks by Jean Deyrolle, Émile Gilioli, Hans Hartung, Jean Leppien, Marie Raymond, Julian Schnabel and Gérard Schneider.

Pierre Soulages was exhibited in the United States for the first time in the same year, his works showing at the *Painted 1949* exhibition at the Betty Parson Gallery in New York. The São Paulo Museum of Art also presented his works as part of the *Figuration et Abstraction* exhibition.

Pierre Soulages' works featured in many exhibitions of French art around the world, including *Advancing French Art* at the Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C. in 1951—which toured around the United States—and *Young Painters from U.S. and France*. Organised by Léo Castelli at the Sidney Janis Gallery in 1953, the latter confronted French artists with their American counterparts. From 1954 onwards, Soulages regularly exhibited his works at the Kootz Gallery in New York, which also represented Gérard Schneider.

Between 1949 and 1952, Pierre Soulages designed sets for ballets and plays. In 1951, he made his first prints at the Lacourière printmaking workshop.

From around 1955, Soulages' painting style evolved, his works featuring a more heavily painted style with more density. Discussing his approach, the artist explained: "I like textures that change, time trapped by textures."

The paintings and works of Soulages were regularly exhibited at the Galerie de France in Paris between 1956 and 1992. Pierre Soulages travelled to the United States, where he met the artists Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Robert Motherwell. In 1956, Soulages won the Grand Prize at the Tokyo Biennale. In 1959, the painter built a studio in Sète, in the South of France, where he still works today.

Soulages' work evolved once more in the 1960s, as the artist abandoned his use of thick black lines. Black paint would invade the entire surface of the canvas, no longer broken by a contrasting white background. Soulages still used a few colours such as black and blue, but his palette remained very limited. In the words of the artist himself: "The more limited the means, the stronger the expression." His first retrospective exhibitions took place during this period: in Hanover in 1960, in Essen, the Hague and Zurich in 1961 and at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1967.

PIERRE SOULAGES' OUTRENOIR WORKS

In 1979, a solo exhibition of Soulages' work was presented at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, featuring single-pigment works created to demonstrate the different reflections of light on black surfaces—these were his "outrenoir" [beyond black] works. The paintings played on the reflection of light with ridges and grooves shaped in the surface of the pictorial space.

In 1984, the Seibu Museum in Tokyo held a retrospective of the painter's work. In 1987, Soulages began working on a project—creating 104 stained glass windows—for the Abbey of Conques, which he completed in 1994.

A catalogue raisonné entitled *Soulages, œuvre complet: peintures* edited by Pierre Encrevé was published by Éditions du Seuil between 1994 and 1998.

In 2005, Pierre Soulages made an exceptional donation of 500 pieces to the Communauté d'agglomération du Grand Rodez [the Rodez agglomeration community], including his entire print collection, preparatory works for the Conques stained glass windows, paintings on canvas and paper, and archival materials. Soulages would make a second donation in 2012.

In 2007, Soulages also donated a selection of his works to the city of Montpellier, where the Musée Fabre subsequently organised an exhibition of his works, featuring twenty paintings dating from 1951 to 2006.

The Centre Pompidou presented a major retrospective—its largest to date for a living artist—in October 2009 to mark Soulages' 90th birthday. In parallel, the Musée du Louvre exhibited a 300 x 236 cm painting by the artist dating from 9 July 2000 in the Salon Carré of its Denon wing.

The Musée Soulages opened in Rodez in May 2014 with the exhibition *Outrenoir en Europe, musées et fondations*. The fourth volume of the catalogue raisonné Soulages, *œuvre complet: peintures* was published the year after.

The Musée du Louvre presented a Soulages exhibition in the Salon Carré of its Denon wing to mark the 100th birthday of the painter in 2019. The exhibition featured three 390 x 130 cm paintings dating from August and October 2019. A small exhibition at the Centre Pompidou accompanied the event.

The artist Pierre Soulages continues his artistic endeavours to this day, splitting his time between Paris and Sète.

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SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Aalborg (Denmark), Kunsten Museum of Modern Art
Antibes, Musée Picasso
Berlin, Nationalgalerie
Bielefeld (Germany), Kunsthalle Bielefeld
Bourg-en-Bresse (France), Musée de Brou
Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Cambridge, MA, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University
Canberra (Australia), National Gallery of Australia
Chicago, IL, Art Institute of Chicago
Cincinnati, OH, Cincinnati Art Museum
Clermont-Ferrand, FRAC Auvergne
Cleveland, OH, Museum of Art
Koblenz, Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus
Colmar, Musée Unterlinden
Cologne, Museum Ludwig
Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst
Detroit, MI, Detroit Institute of Arts
Dunkirk, Lieu d'Art et Action Contemporaine
Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
Edinburgh (Scotland), Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
Essen, Museum Folkwang
Évreux, Musée d'Évreux
Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art
Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble
Hakone (Japan), Open-Air Museum
Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle
Hanover, Sprengel Museum
Honolulu, HI, Honolulu Academy of Arts
Houston, TX, Museum of Fine Arts
Karuizawa (Japan), Sezon Museum of Modern Art
Kassel, Staatliche Museen
Klosterneuburg (Austria), Sammlung Essl
Kurashiki (Japan), Ohara Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA, County Museum of Art
Luxembourg, Musée National d'Art
Mannheim (Germany), Kunsthalle Mannheim
Marseille, Musée Cantini
Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria
Metz, Musée de la Cour d'Or – Metz Métropole
Milwaukee, WI, Milwaukee Art Museum
Montpellier, Musée Fabre
Montreal, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
Montreal, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal
Munich, Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst
Münster, Westfälisches Landesmuseum
Nantes, Musée des Arts
Neuhaus (Austria), Museum Liaunig
New Haven, CT, Yale University Art Gallery
New York, NY, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
New York, NY, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Nice, MAMAC
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou
Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
Pittsburgh, PA, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute
Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Art Museum
Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts
Rennes, FRAC Bretagne
Rio de Janeiro, Museu de Arte Moderna
Rodez, Musée Soulages
Santiago, Musée Salvador Allende
São Paulo, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade
Saint-Étienne, Musée d'Art Moderne
Seoul, National Museum of Contemporary Art
Skopje (Macedonia), Museum of Contemporary Art
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie – Sammlung Domnick
Stuttgart, Kunstmuseum
Tampere (Finland), Sara Hildén Art Museum
Tehran, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art
Tokyo, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art
Tokyo, Bridgestone Museum of Art, Ishibashi Foundation
Toulouse, Les Abattoirs
Valencia, Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno
Vienna, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig
Vitry-sur-Seine, MAC/VAL, Fonds départemental d'art contemporain (FDAC) – Val de Marne
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art
Worcester, MA, Worcester Art Museum

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Salon des Surindépendants, Parc des Expositions, Paris, 1947
Französische abstrakte Malerei, Staatsgalerie - Sammlung Domnick, Stuttgart, 1948
Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1948
Peintures et sculptures abstraites, Galerie Allendy, Paris, 1949
Pierre Soulages, Galerie Lydia Conti, Paris, 1949
Galerie Birch, Copenhagen, 1951, 1979
Soulages, Galerie Otto Stangl, Munich, 1952
Kootz Gallery, New York, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1964, 1965
Mathieu – Soulages, Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, 1954
Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, 1955, 1967, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1980
Galerie de France, Paris, 1956, 1960, 1963, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1986, 1992
Pierre Soulages, gouaches et gravures, Galerie Berggruen, Paris, 1957
Retrospective, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, 1960
Pierre Soulages, Gemeente Museum, The Haye, 1961
Pierre Soulages, Kunsthau, Zurich, 1961

Retrospective, Museum Folkwang, Essen, 1961, 2016
Soulages. Malerier og raderinger., Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, 1963
Pierre Soulages – Rétrospective, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1966
Musée national d'Art moderne, Paris, 1967, 1979, 2009, 2019
Pierre Soulages – Retrospective, Musée du Québec, Québec, 1968
Pierre Soulages – Retrospective, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, 1968
Pierre Soulages – Paintings since 1963, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, 1968
Pierre Soulages – Paintings since 1963, Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1968
Pierre Soulages – Paintings since 1963, Knoedler Gallery, New York, 1968
Rétrospective, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Neuchâtel, 1973
Peintures 1964-1972, Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg (Denmark), 1973
Peintures 1964-1972, Kunstforeningen Gentofte Rådhus, Charlottenlund (Copenhagen), 1973
Peintures 1964-1972, HOK - Henie-Onstad Artsenter, Høvikodden (Norway), 1973
Soulages, Musée Dynamique, Dakar, 1974
Pierre Soulages, Atelier des Halles, Paris, 1974
Pierre Soulages, Maison des Arts, Montbéliard, 1974
Rétrospective, Salas del Patrimonio Artístico y Cultural, Madrid, 1975
Retrospective, Museu de Arte Moderno, Mexico, 1975
Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 1975, 1999, 2010, 2011
Retrospective, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 1975
Retrospective, Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Étienne, 1976
Retrospective, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro RJ, 1976
Retrospective, Fundação Cultural, Brasília, 1976
Retrospective, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade, São Paulo, 1976
Retrospective, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, 1976
Retrospective, Künstlerhaus, Salzburg, 1980
Peintures récentes, Musée du Parc de la Boverie, Liège, 1980
Retrospective, Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 1982
Oeuvres sur papier, Galerie Ostertag, Frankfurt, 1982
Soulages, Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1984
Oeuvres, Musée Saint Pierre Art Contemporain, Lyon, 1987
Gilbert Dupuis invite Pierrette Bloch et Pierre Soulages, Galerie Oniris, Rennes, 1988
Pierre Soulages, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, 1989
Soulages: 40 ans de peinture, Musée des beaux-arts de Nantes, Nantes, 1989
Soulages: 40 ans de peinture, IVAM, Centre Julio González, Valencia, 1989
Soulages: 40 ans de peinture, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 1989
Soulages, Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, 1991
Pierre Soulages: a retrospective, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, 1993

Soulages. A retrospective, Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, 1994
Soulages. A retrospective, the National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 1994
Soulages, Noir lumière, Museu de arte, São Paulo, 1996
Soulages, Noir lumière, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Montreal, 1996
Soulages, Noir lumière, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1996
Pierre Soulages (retrospective), Kunstmuseum, Berne, 1999
Pierre Soulages, 82 peintures, Les Abattoirs, Toulouse, 2000
Lumière du noir, Musée de l'Ermitage, Saint Petersburg, 2001
Soulages l'œuvre imprimé, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Paris, 2003
Pierre Soulages, Painting the Light, Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg bei Wien, 2006
Prix Julio González, Pierre Soulages à l'IVAM, IVAM, Centre Julio González, Valencia, 2007
Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2009
Les Sujets de l'abstraction, 1946-1962 – Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Musée Rath, Geneva, 2011
Soulages XXIe siècle, Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon, Lyon, 2012
Soulages XXI secolo, Villa Medici - Académie de France à Rome, Rome, 2013
Musée Soulages, Rodez, 2014, 2017, 2018
Soulages. Papiers, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 2016
Pierre Soulages – Noir / Lumière, Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus, Koblenz, 2018
Pierre Soulages : Beyond Black, Alisan Fine Arts Central, Central, Hong Kong, 2019
Soulages au Louvre, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2019
Pierre Soulages, La puissance créatrice, Espace Lympia, Nice, 2020

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Michel Ragon, *Les Ateliers de Pierre Soulages*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1990
Nathalie Reymond, *La Lumière et l'Espace*, Paris, Adam Biro, 1999
Henri Meschonnic, *Le Rythme et la lumière avec Pierre Soulages*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2000
Gérard Georges Lemaire, *Pierre Soulages au fond de la rétine de Roger Vailland*, Paris, Les Lettres françaises, 2005
Pierre Encrevé, *Soulages. Les Peintures. 1946-2006*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2007
Jean-Michel Le Lannou, *La Forme souveraine. Soulages, Valéry et la puissance de l'abstraction*, Paris, Hermann, 2008
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Michel Ragon, *Pierre Soulages*, coll. «Ateliers d'artistes», Paris, Thalia, 2009

Pierre Encrevé, *Soulages – 90 peintures sur toiles / 90 peintures sur papier*, Paris, Gallimard, 2009

Pierre Encrevé & Alfred Pacquement, *Soulages*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2009

Claude Pélissier, *Conques, la couleur dans les vitraux de Soulages*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2012

Henri Darasse, *Soulages, la peinture. Poétique de l'accident*, Nîmes, Lucie éditions, 2014

Lydie Dattas, *La Blonde, les icônes barbares de Pierre Soulages*, Paris, Gallimard, 2014

Pierre Encrevé, *Soulages : Les papiers du musée*, Paris, Gallimard, 2014

Pierre Duterte, *Pierre Soulages au fil de l'amitié*, Paris, Michel de Maule, 2016

Michel Pastoureau, *Pierre n'a plus peur du noir*, Paris, Privat, 2016

Robert Fleck & Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Pierre Soulages*, Paris, Manuella, 2017

Bruno Duborgel, *L'art de Pierre Soulages. Approches*, Paris, Bernard Chauveau, 2017

Bruno Duborgel, *Pierre Soulages. Présences d'outrenoir*, Paris, Le Réalgar, 2019

Christian Bobin, *Pierre*, Paris, Gallimard, 2019

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