

Pierre Soulages

Pierre Soulages (French: [sulaʒ]; born 24 December 1919) is a French painter, engraver, and sculptor. In 2014 [François Hollande](#) described him as "the world's greatest living artist."^[1]



Pierre Soulages

Contents

Biography

Artistic Practice

Exhibition History

Selected Publications/Monographs

Honours and awards

See also

References

External links

Biography

Born in [Rodez](#), [Aveyron](#), in 1919, Soulages is also known as "the painter of black," owing to his interest in the colour "both as a colour and a non-colour. When light is reflected on black, it transforms and transmutes it. It opens a mental field all its own." He sees light as a work material; striations of the black surface of his paintings enable him to reflect light, allowing the black to come out of darkness and into brightness, thus becoming a luminous colour

Before [World War II](#), Soulages already had toured museums in Paris seeking his vocation and after wartime military service, he opened a studio in [Paris](#), holding his first exhibition at the [Salon des Indépendants](#) in 1947. He also worked as a designer of stage sets.

In 1979, Pierre Soulages was made a Foreign Honorary Member of the [American Academy of Arts and Letters](#)

From 1987 to 1994, he produced 104 stained glass windows for the Romanesque Abbey church Sainte-Foy in [Conques](#) ([Aveyron](#), [France](#)).^[2]

Soulages is the first living artist invited to exhibit at the state [Hermitage Museum](#) of [St. Petersburg](#) and later with the [Tretyakov Gallery](#) of [Moscow](#) (2001).

A composition he created in 1959 sold for 1.200.000 euros at [Sotheby's](#) in 2006.

In 2007, the [Musée Fabre](#) of [Montpellier](#) devoted an entire room to Soulages, presenting his donation to the city. This donation includes twenty paintings dating from 1951 to 2006, among which are major works from the 1960s, two large plus-black works from the 1970s, and several large [polyptychs](#).

A retrospective of his art was held at the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou from October 2009 to March 2010. In 2010, the Museo de la Ciudad de Mexico presented a retrospective of Soulages' paintings that also included an interview-video with the painter (Spanish subtitles).

In 2014, [Musée Soulages](#) opened in [Rodez](#), France, Soulages' hometown. A museum dedicated to permanently displaying his works; plus temporary contemporary exhibitions, Soulages donated 500 works.^[3] Made in two separate donations, the paintings represent all stages of his work, from post-war oil paintings to his phase of work called *Outrenoir*. Together they have formed his most complete display of work from the first 30 years of his career.^[4]

Also in 2014 was Soulages' first American exhibition in 10 years, which was jointly hosted at [Dominique Lévy](#) and [Galerie Perrotin](#), New York, in which he presented 14 of his recent works.

Artistic Practice

Soulages has said, "My instrument is not black but the light reflected from the black."^[5] Naming his own practice 'Outrenoir', (Beyond Black) the paintings he produces are known for their endless black depth, created by playing with the light reflected off of the texture of the paint. Knowing that he needed a new term to define the way that he was working, Soulages invented 'Outrenoir' to define his practice. Not having a translation into English, the closest meaning is 'beyond black.' In an interview in 2014 he explains the definition of the term, "Outrenoir doesn't exist in English; the closest is "beyond black." In French, you say "outr-Manche," "beyond the Channel," to mean England or "outr-Rhin," "beyond the Rhine," to mean Germany. In other words, "beyond black" is a different country from black."^[6]

The infatuation Soulages has with black began long before his investigations with 'Outrenoir' at the age of 60.^[7] Initially started by his interest with the prehistoric^[6] and his want of retreating to something more pure, primal and deliberately stripped of any other connotations, he says of his fascination with the colour, "during thousands of years, men went underground, in the absolute black of grottoes, to paint with black."^[7] "I made these because I found that the light reflected by the black surface elicits certain emotions in me. These aren't monochromes.

The fact that light can come from the colour which is supposedly the absence of light is already quite moving, and it is interesting to see how this happens."^[6]

Applying the paint in thick layers, Soulages' painting technique includes using objects such as spoons, tiny rakes and bits of rubber to work away at the painting, often making scraping, digging or etching movements depending on whether he wants to evoke a smooth or rough surface. The texture that is then produced either absorbs or rejects light, breaking up the surface of the painting by disrupting the uniformity of the black.^{[8][9]} He often uses bold cuts in vertical and horizontal lines, the crevasses and forms created by using angles and contours. In his recent work from 2013-14 Soulages began to more explicitly vary the pigment used in the paint, mixing matt and glossy types of black as well as hardened densities of black pigment.^[10] Preferring to suspend the paintings like walls, he uses wires to hang them in the middle of the room, "I always liked paintings to be walls rather than windows. When we see a painting on a wall, it's a window so I often put my paintings in the middle of the space to make a wall. A window looks outside, but a painting should do the opposite—it should look inside of us"^[6]

Instead of having titles, Soulages paintings are named by their size and date of production. *17 December 1966* from 1966, in the collection of the [Honolulu Museum of Art](#) demonstrates the artist's boldly brushed black on white canvases.^[11] The [Centre Georges Pompidou](#) (Paris), the [Honolulu Museum of Art](#), the [Montreal Museum of Fine Arts](#), the [Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris](#), the [Museum of Modern Art](#) (New York), [Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro](#), the [National Gallery of Art](#) (Washington D.C.), the [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum](#) (New York), and the [Tate Gallery](#) (London) are among the public collections holding work by **Pierre Soulages**



17 December 1966 by Pierre Soulages
Honolulu Museum of Art

Exhibition History

Year	Selected Solo Exhibition	Gallery/Museum
2016-2017	Noir c'est noir? Les Outrenoirs de Pierre Soulages	ArtLab EPFL, Lausanne
2016	Pierre Soulages: Le Noir	Museum Folkwang, Essen
2014	Pierre Soulages: Les Outrenoir(s)	Musée Soulages, Rodez
2014	Inauguration of Musée Soulages, Rodez	Musée Soulages, Rodez
2014	Pierre Soulages	Dominique Lévy Gallery with Galerie Perrotin, New York
2013	Soulages Xxle Siècle	Villa Médicis, Rome; also seen in: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, Lyon
2010	Pierre Soulages, New Paintings	Bernard Jacobson Gallery London
2009	Pierre Soulages en Son Musée	L'Expérience RCR Architectes, Cité de L'Architecture et Du Patrimoine, Paris
2009	Pierre Soulages. Einzelausstellung Zum 90. Geburtstag	Galerie Boisserée, Köln
2009	Rétrospective Pierre Soulages	Galerie Pacal Lansberg, Paris
2009	Soulages. Le Temps Du Papier	Musée D'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg
2009	Soulages	Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
2009	Pierre Soulages. Hommage Zum 90. Geburtstag	Galerie Rieder, Munich
2006	Pierre Soulages, Painting the Light	Sammlung Essl, Vienna
2005	Pierre Soulages: Outrenoir, Recent Paintings	Robert Miller Gallery New York
2003	Soulages. L'Œuvre Imprimé	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
2001	Pierre Soulages: Lumière Du Noir	Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg; also seen in: Tatyakov Gallery, Moscow
2000	Soulages: 82 Peintures	Les Abattoirs, Toulouse
1999	Soulages, Œuvres Récentes, 1994-99	Musée Fabre, Montpellier
1997	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	Centro de Exposiciones y Congresos, Saragossa
1996	Pierre Soulages: Noir-Lumière	Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; also seen in: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal; Museu de Arte, Sao-Paulo
1993	Pierre Soulages: une rétrospective	National museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; also seen in: Fine Arts Museum, Beijing; Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
1992	Pierre Soulages: Polyptyques 1979-1991	Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou, Cajarc
1991	Pierre Soulages	Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna
1989	Pierre Soulages	Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne
1986	Peintures 1984-1986	FIAC, Paris; also seen in: Galerie de France, Paris

1982	Pierre Soulages: Œuvres Sur Papier	Galerie Ponce, Mexico City; also seen in: Oberhessisches Museum, Glessen; Galerie Ostertag, Frankfurt
1979	Pierre Soulages: Peintures Récentes	Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
1975	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	Museu de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; also seen in: Musée Fabre, Montpellier; Salas del Patrimonio Artístico y Cultural, Madrid; Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbonne
1973	Pierre Soulages: Peintures 1964-1972	Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi; also seen in Rådhus Gentofte, Copenhagen; nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg; S.Henie-N.Onstad Artsenter Hovikodden
1968	Soulages	Musée D'Art Contemporain, Montréal, also seen in: Musée Du Québec, Québec
1968	Pierre Soulages: Paintings Since 1963	Knoedler Gallery, New York; also seen in: Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
1967	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	Musée National D'Art Moderne, Paris
1966	Pierre Soulages	Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1963	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	NY Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
1962	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston
1960	Pierre Soulages: Rétrospective	Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover; also seen in: Folkwang Museum, Essen; Gemeente Museum, The Hague; Kunsthaus, Zurich
1954	Pierre Soulages	Kootz Gallery, New York

Selected Publications/Monographs

Year	Publication Title/Publisher/Gallery	Editor/Contributors
2014	Soulages in America. (Dominique Lévy Gallery, New York)	Texts by Philippe Unger, Harry Cooper, Sean Sweeney, Dominique Lévy
2011	Soulages l'oeuvre imprimé. (Bibliothèque Nationale de France/ Musée Soulages, Paris)	Edited by Pierre Encrevé, Marie-Cécile Miessner
2011	Pierre Soulages. (Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin/Hirmer, Munich)	Essays by Hans Belting, Yve-Alain Bois, Pierre Encrevé, Alfred Pacquement, Serge Guilbaut, Bernard de Montferrand, Alain Seban, Joachim Sartorius, Gereon Sievernich, Hans-Ulrich Obrist; edited by Pierre Encrevé, Alfred Pacquement
2010	Verre cartons des vitraux de Conques. (Musée Fabre, Montpellier)	Essays by Pierre Soulages, Jean-Dominique Fleury, Benoît Decron
2010	Pierre Soulages. (Bernard Jacobson Gallery, London)	Essays by John Yau and Mel Gooding
2009	Soulages, le temps du papier (Cercle d'Art, Paris/ Musée d'Art Moderne, Contemporain de Strasbourg (MAMCS), Strasbourg)	Text by Michel Ragon, Estelle Pietrzyk, Gilbert Dupuis
2009	SOULAGES. (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)	Essays by Alain Seban, Alfred Pacquement, Pierre Encrevé, Serge Guilbaut, Yve-Alain Bois, Guitermie Maldonado, Annie Claustres, Harry Cooper, Hans Belting, Isabelle Ewig, Éric de Chasse, Hans Ulrich Obrist; Edited by Pierre Encrevé, Alfred Pacquement
2007	Pierre Soulages au Musée Fabre, Parcours d'un accrochage. (Interprint, Montpellier)	Photos by Vincent Cunillère; Essays by Georges Frêche, Michel Hilaire, Emmanuel Nebout, Laurence Javal, Olivier Brochet, Yves Larbiou, Dan McEnroe, Thierry Dieudonnat, Pierre Susini, Claude Cougnenc, Pierre Encrevé
2006	Pierre Soulages. Painting the light. (Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg-Venna)	Essays by Karlheinz Essl, Andrea Rygg Karberg
2001	Soulages - Lumière du noir (Paris-Musées, Paris)	Essays by Mikhaïl Piotrovsky, Suzanne Pagé, Albert Kosténévitch, Pierre Encrevé, Jean-Claude Marcadé; Preface by Vladimir Ākovlev, Bertrand Delanoë, maire de Paris
1999	Pierre Soulages, Célébration de la lumière. (Skira-Le Seuil, Paris/Musée des Beaux-Arts, Berne)	Essays by Sandor Kuthy, Pierre Soulages
1998	Soulages, L'oeuvre complet, Peintures III, 1979-1997. (Seuil, Paris)	Text by Pierre Encrevé
1997	Pierre Soulages, Malerei als farbe und licht, Rétrospective 1946-1997. (Deichtorhallen, Hamburg)	Essays by Zdenek Felix, Robert Fleck, Charles Juliet
1996	Soulages, Noir lumière. (Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris)	Essays by Suzanne Pagé, Jean-Louis Andral, Pierre Encrevé, Robert Fleck, Donald Kuspit, William Rubin
1996	Soulages. (Flammarion, Paris: pp. 87-149)	Interview with the artist by Bernard Ceysson
1994	Pierre Soulages: une retrospective (Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei/National Museum of China, Beijing)	Essays by Huang Kuang-nan, Alfred Pacquement, Jean-Paul Réau, François Marcel Plaisant
1994	Les vitraux de Soulages (Seuil, Paris)	Georges Duby, Christian Heck
1993	Pierre Soulages: une	Essays by Young-Bang Lim, Alfred Pacquement, Bernard Prague

	retrospective (Musée National d'Art Contemporain, Séoul)	
1992	Pierre Soulages, polyptyques 1979-1991 (Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou, Cajarc)	Essays by Pierre Daix, Pierre Encrevé, Claire Stoullig
1991	Soulages, peintures récentes (Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Menna)	Essays by Lorand Hegyi, Alfred Pacquement
1990	Polyptyques (Le Louvre, Paris)	Text by Isabelle Monod-Fontaine
1989	Soulages: 40 Jahre Malerei (German ed. Museum Fridericianum, Kassel/Cantz Verlag, Stuttgart)	Text by Veit Loers, Bernard Ceysson
1989	Soulages: 40 ans de peinture (French ed. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes)	Essays by Henry-Claude Cousseau, Veit Loers
1989	Soulages: 40 años de pintura (Spanish ed. Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia)	Essays by Bernard Ceysson, Veit Loers
1987	Nous avons visité le Musée d'Orsay avec Pierre Soulages (L'Événement du Jeudi, Paris: pp. 82–84)	Interview with the artist by Jean-Louis Pradel
1987	Pierre Soulages (Musée Saint-Pierre Art Contemporain, Lyon/Hans Thoma-Gesellschaft, Reutlingen)	Essays by Georges Duby, Pierre Encrevé, Henri Meschonnic, Werner Meyer, Thierry Raspail, Clément Rosset
1984	Soulages (Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo)	Essays by Taka Ashido Okada, d'Alfred Pacquement
1980	Soulages, peintures récentes (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris/Musée du Parc de la Boverie, Liège)	Essays by Pontus Hulten, Alfred Pacquement
1976	Soulages (Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Saint-Etienne: p. 5-32, 42)	Interview with the artist by Bernard Ceysson
1975	L'aventure de l'art moderne (1): Pierre Soulages (Galerie Jardin des Arts, Paris: September p. 150)	Interview with the artist by André Parinaud
1974	Soulages, peintures, gravures (1st ed. Musée Dynamique, Dakar/Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon)	Text by Léopold Sédar Senghor

Honours and awards

- Grand Prix for Painting (Paris, 1975)
- Rembrandt Award (Germany, 1976)
- Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1979)
- Grand prix national de peinture (France, 1986)
- Praemium Imperiale for painting (Japan, 1994)
- Austrian Decoration for Science and Art (2005)^[12]
- Prix Julio González (Valencia, 2006)
- La Légion d'honneur (Paris, 2015)

See also

- [Tachisme](#)
- [Abstract expressionism](#)
- [Lyrical abstraction](#)

References

1. Hugh Schofield (24 June 2014). "The president and the 'greatest living artist' in the world"(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27923721>) BBC News. Retrieved 24 June 2014.
2. "Soulages - Pierre Soulages et les vitraux de l'abbatiale de Conques - Ina.fr"(<http://fresques.ina.fr/soulages/fiche-media/Soulag00025/pierre-soulages-et-les-vitraux-de-l-abbatiale-de-conques.html>) Soulages. Retrieved 2017-12-07.
3. Artnet, "Pierre Soulages"(<http://www.artnet.com/artists/pierre-soulages/>) Retrieved June 2016
4. [1] (<http://musee-soulages.rodezagglo.fr/museum-soulages/#bloc-num-1>)The Museum, Musée Soulages, Retrieved June 2016
5. Musée Soulages, Rodez[2] (<http://musee-soulages.rodezagglo.fr/oeuvre/peinture-324-x-362-cm-1986-polyptyque-i/>) Works, A Closer Look, Painting, 324 X 362 cm, 1986 (Polyptyque I) Retrieved July 2016
6. [3] (<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/pierresoulages/#>) Interview Magazine, Pierre Soulages, Zoe Stillpass, 5 August 2014, Retrieved July 2016
7. [4] (<https://news.artnet.com/market/pierre-soulages-happy-to-stay-in-the-dark-43580>) Artnet, Pierre Soulages, Happy to Stay in the Dark, Ben Davis, 19 June 2014, Retrieved July 2016
8. Jean-Max Albert, *Pierre Soulages, Mouvement sans emplacement*, Opus International, n°57, 1975.
9. [5] (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/6325178/Black-is-the-new-black-for-Pierre-Soulages-Frances-best-known-living-artist.html>) The Telegraph (online) Black is the new black for Pierre Soulages, France's best known living artist, Claire Rosemberg, 14 October 2009, Retrieved July 2016
10. [6] (<http://hyperallergic.com/126322/pierre-soulages-painter-of-black-and-light/>) hyperallergic (online), Pierre Soulages: Painter of Black and Light, Robert C. Morgan, 14 May 2014, Retrieved July 2016
11. Honolulu Museum of Art, wall label, *17 December 1966*, accession 4400.1
12. "Reply to a parliamentary question"(http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/AB/AB_10542/imfname_251156.pdf) (pdf) (in German). p. 1712 Retrieved 23 November 2012.

External links

- [Official web site](#)
- [New Soulages museum opens in Rodez](#)
- [Biography, pictures at Galerie Birch](#)
- [Musée Soulages](#)
- [Atelier JD Fleury](#)
- [Centre Pompidou Mrtuel | Espace Presse](#)
- [Pierre Soulages – Blues](#)

Retrieved from 'https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pierre_Soulages&oldid=863045251

This page was last edited on 8 October 2018, at 10:47 UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.