

LÉVY GORVY

LÉVY GORVY PRESENTS NEW AND HISTORIC WORKS BY FRENCH MASTER IN HIS CENTENARY YEAR

Pierre Soulages: A Century

September 5—October 26, 2019

Lévy Gorvy
909 Madison Avenue
New York



Pierre Soulages. *Peinture 195 x 130 cm, 30 octobre 1957, 1957*. Oil on canvas, 76 3/4 x 51 3/16 inches (195 x 130 cm) © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

New York—Lévy Gorvy is pleased to announce *Pierre Soulages: A Century*, an exhibition celebrating the 100th birthday of France’s foremost living artist through a presentation of works spanning his career from the 1950s to today. On view from September 5 through October 26, 2019, this focused survey explores the artist’s enduring role in the dialogue between European and American painting and invites viewers to consider the impact of a practice that has injected profound poetry into radical abstraction through its adherence to a single material: black paint.

Filling all three floors of Lévy Gorvy’s landmark building at 909 Madison Avenue, *Pierre Soulages: A Century* is a prelude to *Homage to Soulages*, the artist’s solo exhibition at the Musée du Louvre, Paris, opening in December 2019. Curated by the late Pierre Encrevé, art historian and author of the Soulages catalogue raisonné, and Alfred Pacquement, the Honorary General Curator and former Director of the Centre Pompidou, the Louvre exhibition marks one of the very few times in the revered institution’s history that the Salon Carré has been entirely devoted to the presentation of work by a single living artist—an unparalleled honor.

Pierre Soulages: A Century at Lévy Gorvy will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog with new essays by Alfred Pacquement and American art critic Brooks Adams.

Bringing together seminal paintings from the 1950s and 1960s that were either first exhibited in America or now reside in major American collections, the exhibition charts Soulages’s sustained investigation of abstraction — “a poetic experience,” he once wrote, that “signifies the world by transfiguring it”— from his early inspired encounters with the New York School to his continued innovations today. Also on view will be exceptional examples from Soulages’s *Outrenoir* series initiated in 1979. Translating to “beyond black,” *outrenoir* describes works in which dense layers of pigment record subtle shifts in ambient light. Thus incorporating darkness and radiance, each canvas invites the viewer to actively ponder the dynamics of repetition and change that structure Soulages’s oeuvre. “*Outrenoir* is not an optical phenomenon,” the artist has said. “It’s a mental state that you reach when you look deep into it, it’s beyond black.”

Soulages's early canvases and *Outrenoir* paintings will be paired with never before exhibited works made between 2017 and 2019. Distilling painting to its essentials, these recent paintings find the master continuing to push the medium of painting forward, endlessly questioning the boundaries between intuition and perception.

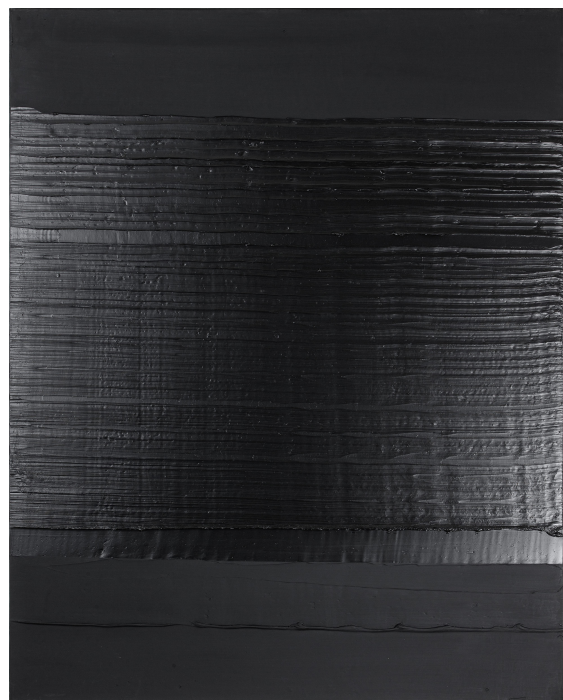
Exhibition Highlights

Pierre Soulages has enjoyed a storied career spanning more than seven decades. In 1948, James Johnson Sweeney, then a curator at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, visited Soulages's Paris studio after hearing talk of a young artist who made use of unorthodox tools and bold black paint. With Sweeney's support, Soulages joined the eminent Kootz Gallery in New York in 1954 and rapidly rose to prominence in America. In recognition of this key year in the artist's life, the exhibition at Lévy Gorvy will include *Peinture 55 x 38 cm, décembre 1954*, a pivotal work featuring slabs of brushed black, red, brown, and ocher that accrue in a grid-like array. Acquired by American collectors, this canvas remained in the same family collection for 65 years.

While overlapping with Abstract Expressionism, Soulages maintained a resolute independence, insisting that his true language was that of modern art while drawing on a range of earlier sources, from ancient menhirs to Romanesque architecture. *Pierre Soulages: A Century* will feature several highlights from his important early period, including *Peinture 195 x 130 cm, 20 novembre 1956*, a work on loan from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, that was part of the



Pierre Soulages. *Peinture 92 x 73 cm, 27 février 1989, 1989*. Oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 28 3/4 inches (92 x 73 cm). © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein.



Pierre Soulages. *Peinture 165 x 130 cm, 25 juillet 2017, 2017*. Acrylic on canvas, 65 x 51 3/16 inches (165 x 130 cm). © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Arthus Boutin.

inaugural installation at the institution's Frank Lloyd Wright building in 1959. Also on view will be *Peinture 195 x 130 cm, 30 octobre 1957*. On loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., this painting's composition is articulated in bands of black and blue that engage in tensile visual dialogue.

Alongside these historic canvases, key works from Soulages's *Outrenoir* series will shed light on the development of this iconic body of work from the 1980s through the 1990s. The formidable *Peinture 222 x 137 cm, Printemps 1980* marks the first time Soulages introduced this specific set of dimensions that have since become characteristic of his *Outrenoir* works. Also on view will be Soulages's stunning *Peinture 92 x 73 cm, 27 février 1989*, in which a field of black horizontal brushstrokes is bordered by radiant bands of blue— an example of the artist's use of the marine color in his most famous series.

Pierre Soulages: A Century will furthermore debut a suite of new paintings from the past two years. Among these is the powerful large-scale *Peinture 202 x 143 cm, 5 avril 2019*. Animated by a seductive play of light across a landscape of richly-textured

brushwork, this painting attests to the timeless force of an artist whom philosopher Alain Badiou has described as "a perennial contemporary."

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, and in Central, Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. The Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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