

SOULAGES

UNE AUTRE LUMIÈRE

PEINTURES SUR PAPIER



From September 17 2025 to January 11 2026

At the Musée du Luxembourg

19 rue de Vaugirard 75006 Paris

Open every day from 10.30am to 7pm

Late-night opening on Mondays until 10pm

Closed on 25 December only

Open from 10.30am to 6pm on 24 and 31 December

PLACES AUX JEUNES !

Free admission for young people under 26 from Monday to Friday

Limited number of tickets per date, online booking required at
museeduluxembourg.fr

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THE EXHIBITION

1. The 1940s

Born into an artisanal household, Soulages attempted to paint the landscapes of the Causses when he was still a teenager. Marked by his visit to the abbey of Sainte-Foy de Conques, he decided to pursue painting but refused to accept the place he was offered at the École des Beaux-arts in Paris because the teaching offered there did not suit him.

Returning to Montpellier, he enrolled at the École des Beaux-arts where he met Colette Llaurens, whom he married in October 1942. In order to escape the compulsory labour service, he went underground. He moved to Courbevoie in the spring of 1946, then to Paris the following year and a new studio in Montparnasse.

Abstract from the start, his earliest works drew the attention of fellow artists such as Francis Picabia and Hans Hartung, and critics and writers including Michel

Ragon and Roger Vailland.

While Soulages painted around fifteen canvases in 1946-47, it is mainly his paintings on paper that constitute the true origins of his work. He began with charcoals, applied energetically to the paper. But these lines of movement soon left him dissatisfied. He opted then for walnut stain, an ordinary material used by carpenters to dye wood. Its dark and warm tone allowed him to achieve transparency and opacity naturally using house painters' tools. His broad and powerful lines are inscribed with hieratic signs that gradually occupy the space on the paper.

2. Französische Abstrakte Malerei, Germany, 1948-49

On the initiative of Dr Ottomar Domnick, an admirer of abstract art, a travelling exhibition of French abstract painters toured German museums during 1948-49. This followed the participation of German painters in Paris in the third Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, featuring artists who had been banned from painting and

exhibiting by the Nazi regime.

The Französische Abstrakte Malerei exhibition brought together ten painters from different generations, chosen by Dr Domnick, including some of the historical pioneers of abstraction such as František Kupka or César Domela. It was presented successively in seven museums and was a political and cultural event of great importance. Soulages was by far the youngest participant with works on canvas on display, and he also presented a series of paintings on paper that are renowned for their graphic power. His inclusion in the exhibition, while still largely unknown, not to mention the choice of one of his walnut stain pieces for the poster, will add to his ever growing reputation.

3. Documentation Centre

The approximately eight hundred paintings on paper (1946-2004) created by Pierre Soulages form a major part of his oeuvre, seen in his earliest exhibitions. Depending on the artist's choice, these works on

paper are displayed along with paintings, prints or bronzes, or sometimes alone. His paintings on paper featured heavily in the earliest retrospectives in the early 1960s, allowing the public to discover the art of Soulages using different media and techniques. These works were featured in several posters for group or solo exhibitions and cultural events, giving them wide visibility.

The 2000s can be seen as a foundational period in the artist's oeuvre, presented at the Soulages museum in Rodez, inaugurated in 2014, as well as in exhibitions dedicated to his paintings on paper, including a retrospective at the Musée du Luxembourg, the first to be held in Paris.

4. The 1950s

Soulages' work gained international visibility during this decade. Starting in 1954 and eight times over the following ten years, the Kootz Gallery in New York exhibited his recent paintings, which were popular with American collectors. Soulages rarely exhibited

in his own country during this period, although the Berggruen Gallery in Paris presented a collection of gouaches and aqua fortes in 1957, which made a significant impression at the time. Nutmeg remained his preferred material at the start of the decade, with broad, sometimes knife-cut strokes. His materials and techniques were diversifying at varied rates. Some paintings with intersecting marks can be compared to his canvases from the same period, in which the same formal structure can sometimes be found.

5. The 1960s

Soulages was now working in two studios, one in Paris and the other in Sète, in the house that Colette had built facing the sea. The sixties saw the first museum retrospectives in museums, initially in Germany (Hannover, Essen, etc), then in the United States (Boston, Houston) and finally in Paris, at the Musée National d'Art Moderne. Paintings on paper were created in large numbers alongside canvases, proof of their significance to the painter. 1963 saw the first exhibition exclusively dedicated to paintings on paper

at the Galerie de France in Paris, with some fifty works gathered from 1946 to 1963. The critic Michel Ragon also produced the first book on these works at the same time. During this decade, Soulages favoured ink and often worked with contrasts between layers of black ink, sometimes treated with wash, and the white of the paper, while his formats grew in size. A 1963 painting of exceptional dimensions was exhibited at Documenta III in Kassel in the following year.

6. The 1970s

A major retrospective at the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Étienne in 1976 gave significant place to his paintings on paper, particularly the walnut sprinkles of the years 1947-51. Several exhibitions were also held in museums in Latin America during this period, confirming the painter's international stature. In 1973, and again in 1977, Soulages abandoned canvas in favour of paper. He produced one hundred large vinyl gouaches over the course of 1977, which he continued the following year. It was the Galerie de France again that revealed that works in a double exhibition at the

International Fair of Contemporary Art and on its own walls. These new paintings were characterised by their monumentality consisting, for some, of broad lines running across the white of the paper. But Soulages never limited himself to a single style. A series of gouaches gave way to the blue colour often found in his canvases from the same era. Others are dominated by black combined with subtle greys obtained from ink wash.

7. Final paintings on paper : 1995-2004

The year 1979 saw the start of a new phase of painting that Soulages named «outrenoir» (beyond black), exhibited for the first time at the Centre Pompidou. The canvases were now fully coated with a single black pigment. Depending on the tools used to apply the material, blade or brush, the texture of the surface, ragged or smooth, will alter the light to present different qualities. Paintings on paper became more scarce. At times, however, Soulages would

return to this medium for large works created with lead pencil on a black background (a method he had never used before) or using black and white contrast, applying the ink by tearing or printing on random surfaces, as seen in certain canvases from the same period. He finally returned to walnut stain, structuring the space into wide horizontal black or brown stripes of great power, leaving room for splashes of white. Soulages no longer used paper after 2004, devoting himself to the endless possibilities offered by «outrenoir» painting, until his death in October 2022 at the age of 102.

Commissaire général

Alfred Pacquement

Conservateur honoraire du patrimoine,
directeur honoraire du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre
Pompidou et commissaire de l'exposition

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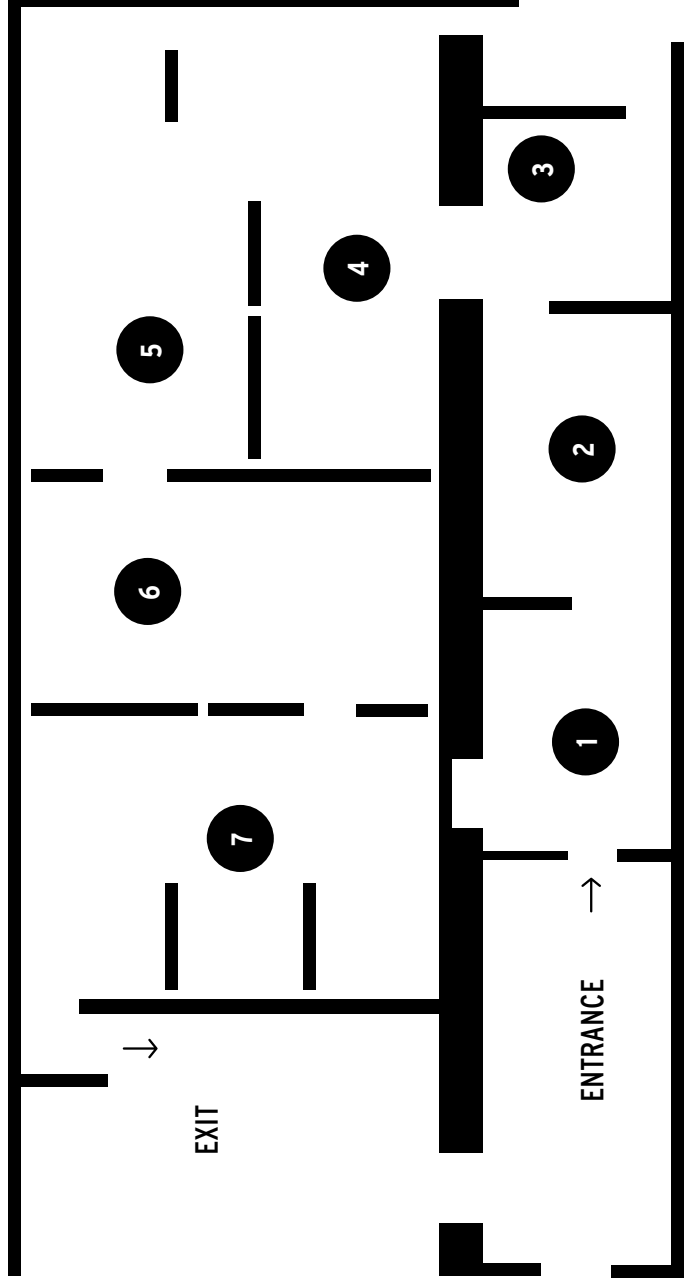
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Exhibition Map

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MUSEUM LECTURES (held in French)

At the Palais du Luxembourg, Salle Médicis, entrance via 15^{ter} rue de Vaugirard.

Advance booking required, free of charge up to 3 working days before the event at www.museeduluxembourg.fr.

Lectures available online on the museum's website.

Introductory Lecture

Thursday 9 October at 6:30 pm

With Alfred Pacquement, Honorary Heritage Curator, former Director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, and curator of the exhibition.

Few exhibitions have been devoted to Soulages' works on paper, making this one at the Musée du Luxembourg highly anticipated—especially by the artist's widow, Colette Soulages. In this talk, the curator will explore the unique qualities of this rich aspect of Soulages' work and the challenges of presenting it in an exhibition.

Pierre Soulages and Germany

Friday 7 November at 6:30 pm

With Marie-Amélie zu Salm-Salm, art historian and exhibition curator.

This lecture highlights the importance of the Paris art scene after World War II and the key role Pierre Soulages played in the renewal of abstraction in Germany. It shows how artists were pioneers of Franco-German rapprochement even before political decisions, and how crucial Germany was for launching Soulages' artistic career.

Pierre Soulages, Painter-Architect

Monday 1 December at 6:30 pm

With Maud Marron-Wojewodzki, Heritage Curator, Director of the Soulages Museum, Rodez.

"Painter-architect": this was how Léopold Sédar Senghor described Soulages in 1958. Poet Édouard Jaguer also stressed his "masoned, troweled" colours and canvases whose forms "stood like the framework of a house." A constructed occupation of space, Soulages' art constantly engages in dialogue with

architecture, right down to his careful consideration of installation and hanging systems.

The Conques Stained Glass Windows, an Exceptional Public Commission

Wednesday 10 December at 6:30 pm

With Jean Dominique Fleury, master glassmaker, and Béatrice Salmon, Director of the Centre national des arts plastiques.

“To enable the artist to achieve the light he envisioned for the abbey church of Conques, everything had to be invented: the glass itself, as well as the techniques for fabricating and installing the windows.” Jean Dominique Fleury, who interpreted the artist’s vision, will present the stages of this long creative process. He will be introduced by Béatrice Salmon, then in charge of public commissions at the Ministry of Culture, who will set the context for this landmark project.

EVENTS AND EVENINGS

Creative Writing Workshops around the Works of Pierre Soulages

Mondays 6 October, 3 & 17 November, 8 December at 6:30 pm. Duration: 2h. Ages 16+.

Experience the exhibition from a unique perspective: starting from Soulages' works, awaken not only your gaze but also your creativity by taking up the pen. Participate in a shared moment of discovery in a writing workshop led by Aleph-Écriture, a creative writing school since 1985. Do not miss this chance to make art and writing resonate!

Sketchbook Evening

Thursday 20 November, 7-9 pm. Duration: 2h. Reservation required. Free for visitors; €11 otherwise.

Workshop: €10 for visitors; €21 otherwise.

Does Soulages' work inspire you? Whether you are a seasoned draughtsman or a beginner, the Sketchbook Evening offers two ways to create from the artist's

work: face-to-face with the paintings, using your own materials, or in workshops led by artists in the reception hall adjacent to the exhibition rooms.

Workshops organized with the Cercle des artistes.

Night of Light

Saturday 29 November, 7-11 pm.

Free entry, subject to availability. Last admission 10:30 pm.

Concerts at 7:30 and 9 pm in the museum reception hall.

Enjoy free access to the exhibition and a special concert conceived by Julien Guénebaut in resonance with Soulages' painting. The programme includes works by Johann Sebastian Bach, excerpts from Giacinto Scelsi's Suite No. 8 Bot-Bainspired by traditional Tibetan music (which Soulages deeply admired), and Black Letters, a piece composed by Pascal Dusapin for the Soulages exhibition at the Louvre in 2020.

GUIDED TOURS AND WORKSHOPS

General Guided Tour

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday at 12:15 pm.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday at 5 pm. Monday at 5 pm & 8 pm.

Duration: 1h15. Ages 13+.

Soulages' paintings on paper are less known than his canvases. Yet for the artist they were a fertile field of experimentation, contributing to his reputation from the start of his career and continuing until his final years. Guided by a museum lecturer, discover—or rediscover—the full scope of this essential aspect of his work.

General Guided Tour in English

Saturdays at 2:30 pm: 4 October, 8 November, 6 December, 3 January.

Duration: 1h15. Ages 13+.

Family Tour

Sundays at 2:30 pm. Extra sessions during school holidays.

Duration: 1h. Ages 6+.

These tours introduce a lesser-known side of Soulages' work: his paintings on paper. Did Soulages use only black? How did he paint? Why can we see the paper beneath the paint?

A museum lecturer, helping children and their families to enter the painter's universe, will address these and many more questions.

Children's Workshop: Black, Shadow or Light? (in French)

Monday 20 & Thursday 23 October, Tuesday 11 November,
Monday 22 & 29 December at 2:30 pm.

Duration: 2h. Ages 6+.

After exploring Soulages' works, children will experiment the qualities of black color using different tools on large formats, guided by an artist. From these materials, they will create an abstract work that plays with the light of the paper's white and the depth of black.

Schools

Booking and information at museeduluxembourg.fr.

Visits led by a museum lecturer, your own lecturer, or self-guided.

Duration: 45 min-1h15 depending on level.

From kindergarten to university.

On paper as on canvas, light is Soulages' true medium. These visits help students of all ages to grasp the painter's approach and trace the major stages of his artistic journey.

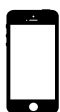
Sound Walks

Austerity and sensuality—two apparently contradictory terms often used to describe Pierre Soulages' work. Both lie at the heart of the sound creations designed for this exhibition. Two distinct but complementary musical gestures respond to Soulages' work through matter itself, attending to sound as one attends to a surface, a grain, a density.

An original creation by Nicolas Charbonnier, Laurent Guérel, and the Tsuku Boshi label.

The sound walks are available for free on the museum's mobile app and website.

DIGITAL RESOURCES



THE FREE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG MOBILE APP

Available on Apple and Google stores. An essential tool for practical information, keeping up to date, preparing your visit, and making the most of exhibitions and events. It includes a free thematic tour of 5 works in the exhibition (in French and English). Audioguides can also be downloaded directly via in-app purchase (€3.49):

- Adult (French, English, Italian, Spanish, German)
- Child (French)
- Download here: <https://tinyurl.com/luxappli>

MUSEEDULUXEMBOURG.FR

A full program of events and practical information to prepare your visit. Find articles on major themes of the exhibition, artwork spotlights, and a wide range of videos, audio, and playful activities for all audiences.

AUDIOGUIDES

Enjoy commentary on the exhibition's major works.

Adult tours available in 5 languages (French, English, German, Spanish, Italian)

Children's tour (French)

Free thematic tour (French & English) on the mobile app.

Price: €5

GrandPalais+ price: €4

Download via the app: €3.49

PUBLICATIONS

Exhibition Catalogue

Dir. Alfred Pacquement, *Soulage, une autre lumière. Peintures sur papier*, GrandPalaisRmn Editions, 2025.

208 pages, 160 illustrations. €45.

Carnet d'exposition

Alfred Pacquement, Carnet d'exposition, GrandPalaisRmnÉditions / DécouvertesGallimard, 2025, 64 pages, 40 illustrations
11,50 €

Pass Grand Palais+

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PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Find more texts, videos, and resources online at museeduluxembourg.fr.

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Mademoiselle ANGELINA

Located at the very heart of the museum, the Mademoiselle Angelina tearoom presents an exclusive menu, conceived as a sensitive and flavorful extension of the exhibition. Discover the dish "Saint-Jacques Outrenoir", a monochrome and luminous composition, along with the "Outrenoir" pastry, a chocolate variation.

Opening:

The Mademoiselle Angelina tearoom is open during the Museum's regular hours—come and enjoy the last fine days on the terrace.