

Pierre Soulages, *Peinture 99 x 222 cm, 27 Novembre 2013* (detail), 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 39 × 87 ⅜ in. (99 × 222 cm)
© Pierre Soulages, ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2026

Pierre Soulages
Outrenoir

5 November — 12 December 2026
15 Bolton Street, London

Timothy Taylor is pleased to present *Outrenoir*, an exhibition of late paintings by Pierre Soulages (1919—2022). Opening 5 November through 12 December, the exhibition features nine luminous monochromes from the artist's iconic *Outrenoir* series, spanning 2003 to 2021, the year before his death at the age of 102.

For more than seven decades, Soulages dedicated his practice to exploring the depths of the colour black and interplay between pictorial and environmental light. Inspired by the Palaeolithic paintings in the Altamira cave in Spain, Romanesque architecture, and the Neolithic menhir statues housed in the Musée Fenaille in his hometown of Rodez, France, he began his career in the late 1940s with dark, graphic abstractions that explored the format and materiality of his medium. In 1979, he initiated the series *Outrenoir*—a neologism that means beyond or across black—which he would develop for the rest of his life. Layering black paint on canvas, Soulages scraped, gouged, brushed, and smeared the surface to produce textures ranging from smooth, glossy expanses to deeply grooved ridges.

These variations in surface allowed the paintings to capture and reflect light in different ways "My instrument is not black," the artist explained, "but the light reflected from the black." Depending on the application of the paint and the conditions of light, the black surfaces reveal tones of grey, silver, and even blue. As light shifts across them, variations in texture produce continually changing effects.

The exhibition offers a nuanced view of the exceptional range of effects Soulages achieved over four decades of working in the series. Each is rendered in impasto acrylic paint, which he adopted exclusively in 2004, allowing him to achieve greater density and more pronounced relief. In *Peinture 130 x 130 cm, 25 avril 2021*, wide, horizontal marks—each smooth, blade-like strokes, with excess paint building up along their edges—are imbricated to create a glistening surface reminiscent of fish scales or alligator leather. *Peinture 181 x 128 cm, 15 décembre 2016* features tapered horizontal strokes of juxtaposed glossy and matte paint, evoking a rain-streaked windowpane. In *21 mai 2012*, narrow, organic marks meet in a wavering zip that runs down the centre of the canvas, reminiscent of a sharp ray of light on choppy water. One included work, *Peinture 102 x 81 cm, 06 décembre 2003*, reveals undertones of ultramarine blue, which Soulages occasionally introduced as an underlayer in the *Outrenoir* series from 1986 onward, lending the paintings an oceanic quality. These works, painted in the final decades of the artist's life, belong to a period that saw the opening of the Musée Soulages in Rodez in 2014 and a major traveling retrospective organised by the Centre Pompidou in 2009. Together, they reflect the breadth of Soulages's sustained exploration of the interplay between darkness and light.

About the Artist

Pierre Soulages (b. 1919, Rodez, France, d. 2022, Sète, France) was a French abstract painter celebrated for his enduring exploration of the dynamic between light and the colour black. Soulages first presented his paintings in the 1947 *Salon des surindependents* and, in 1949, mounted his debut solo exhibition at Galerie Lydia Conti, Paris. That year, his work also featured in a group exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, launching his career alongside Abstract Expressionists in the United States. In 1952, his work appeared in the Venice Biennale, and three years later it featured in the first edition of Documenta in Kassel, Germany (1955). Soulages's first travelling retrospective was organized in 1960 by the Museum Folkwang, Essen. Subsequent retrospectives of his paintings include those at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1966); Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (1967); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1996); Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (2001); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2009); and Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden (2020). In 2019, marking his centennial birthday, the Louvre, Paris, honoured the artist with a survey of his eight-decade career. Soulages's numerous awards include the Grand Prix National de Peinture (1986) and the Praemium Imperiale for Painting from the Japan Art Association (1992). His artwork resides in collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Fogg Museum, Cambridge; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro. In 2014, the Musée Soulages opened in Rodez.

Press Enquiries

Astyaj Bass astyaj@timothytaylor.com +1 917 686 6887