



**ARCHEUS / POST-MODERN**

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**ARTIST**

Pierre Soulages (b.1919)

**TITLE**

Lithographie n° 1

**MEDIUM**

Lithograph in colours on Arches paper

**DATE**

1957

**SIZE**

26 x 20 in : 66.0 x 50.5 cm

**EDITION**

An artist's proof aside from the edition of 60

**INSCRIPTIONS**

Inscribed "épreuve d'artiste" lower left and dedicated "Au Dr. A. Epstein avec mes sentiments amicaux et reconnaissant" and signed, lower right in pencil

**PRINTER**

Printed by Mourlot, Paris

**PUBLISHER**

Published by Berggruen, Paris

**LITERATURE**

"Soulages l'œuvre imprimé", Pierre Encrevé & Marie-Cécile Miessner; Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2003, Cat. 44 (col. illus. pl. 43) and indexed p.188

**REFERENCE**

A19-63



A dedication copy to Alvin Epstein (1925-2018), who was a celebrated classical stage actor and director who appeared in the Broadway premiere of *Waiting for Godot* and went on to become widely known for his mastery of works by Samuel Beckett. He was a founding member of the American Repertory

Company as well as the Yale Repertory Theater and was long affiliated with nonprofit and regional theater. Epstein met and befriended Pierre Soulages and Pierrette Bloch while studying mime in Paris with Marcel Marceau, and the friendships continued whenever they visited New York.

## Pierre Soulages

Pierre Soulages is the last, great, living painter to have been involved at the beginning of Art Informel, the post-war movement which encompassed Tachisme, Abstraction Lyrique, Gutai and CoBrA, that was the European concurrent of Abstract Expressionism and which favoured abandonment of any premeditated approach.

Born in 1919, in Rodez, France, where a museum devoted to his work opened in the summer of 2014, Soulages became known as "the painter of black". By 1946, having rejected formal art training before the war, Soulages established a studio in Paris and exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1947, having his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Lydia Conti in 1949. The paucity of colour in his work set him apart from his contemporaries and established him quickly as an intellectual leader of the Jeune École de Paris, but his rejection of a total abandonment of formality soon set him at odds with the principles of the Informelistes and since the early 1950s, Soulages has defied classification.

A looser style of brushwork increasingly defined his method throughout the 1950s, and a fascination with the surface reflection of, and contrasts within, pure tones of black began to steer his exploration as an

artist. A visit to Japan in 1958 cemented his interest in painted large-scale calligraphy, and this influence is clearly visible for prolonged periods throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Soulages was regularly included in the influential Documenta exhibitions and his first major travelling retrospective took place in Hanover, Essen and The Hague during 1960 and 1961.

Soulages' fascination with black, the tone with which he had come almost exclusively to mark his canvases, became a practical obsession in 1979 with the creation of his first *outrenoir* (beyond black) paintings. With *outrenoir*, black became the starting point of a painting, the canvas itself, upon which he would perform dynamic actions with the brush or palette-knife. In this way, through scoring and scraping, creating ridges, lines and fields of black, Soulages explored the property of black itself and in particular its capacity to hold or reflect light, depending on a simple action performed upon the layer of paint.

A career-crowning retrospective exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in 2010 confirmed Soulages as the father of post-war European abstraction and at the age of almost 100, he continues to work and live in Paris.





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