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artnet News' Top 10 Most Expensive Living French Artists

Coline Milliard, Friday, April 25, 2014



[Pierre Soulages](#).

artnet News's ongoing series on the world's most expensive living artists by nationality turns next to the French—after previous installments devoted to [the Brits](#) and [the Germans](#). And a quick glance at the list below is enough to realize how isolated (others might say undervalued) the market for French art remains. Only three of the auction records presented here hit the million-dollar mark.

Perhaps surprisingly, the generation of French contemporary artists best-known abroad—the likes of [Pierre Huyghe](#), [Philippe Parreno](#), and Xavier Veilhan—is nowhere to be seen. The youngest artist to make the cut is Huang Yong Ping, who turns 60 this year.

It is also worth noting that only one of these records was achieved in the French capital. Most of the others were set in London and New York. As a marketplace, Paris still has a lot to prove.



Pierre Soulages, *Peinture, 21 novembre 1959* (1959).

1. [Pierre Soulages](#)

The master of dark abstraction is something of a national treasure. The artist, now 94, celebrated his 90th birthday with a major exhibition [at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2010](#). A [Soulages Museum](#) will be inaugurated in Rodez, in the South of France, at the end of May. Soulages became the country's most expensive artist at auction in 2013, when his *Peinture, 21 novembre 1959* (1959) sold for \$6,651,08 at Sotheby's London, doubling its presale estimate. According to arnet Analytics, the average value of Soulages's non-print work has increased by 680 percent over the last decade, in tune with the growing interest for post-war abstract art.