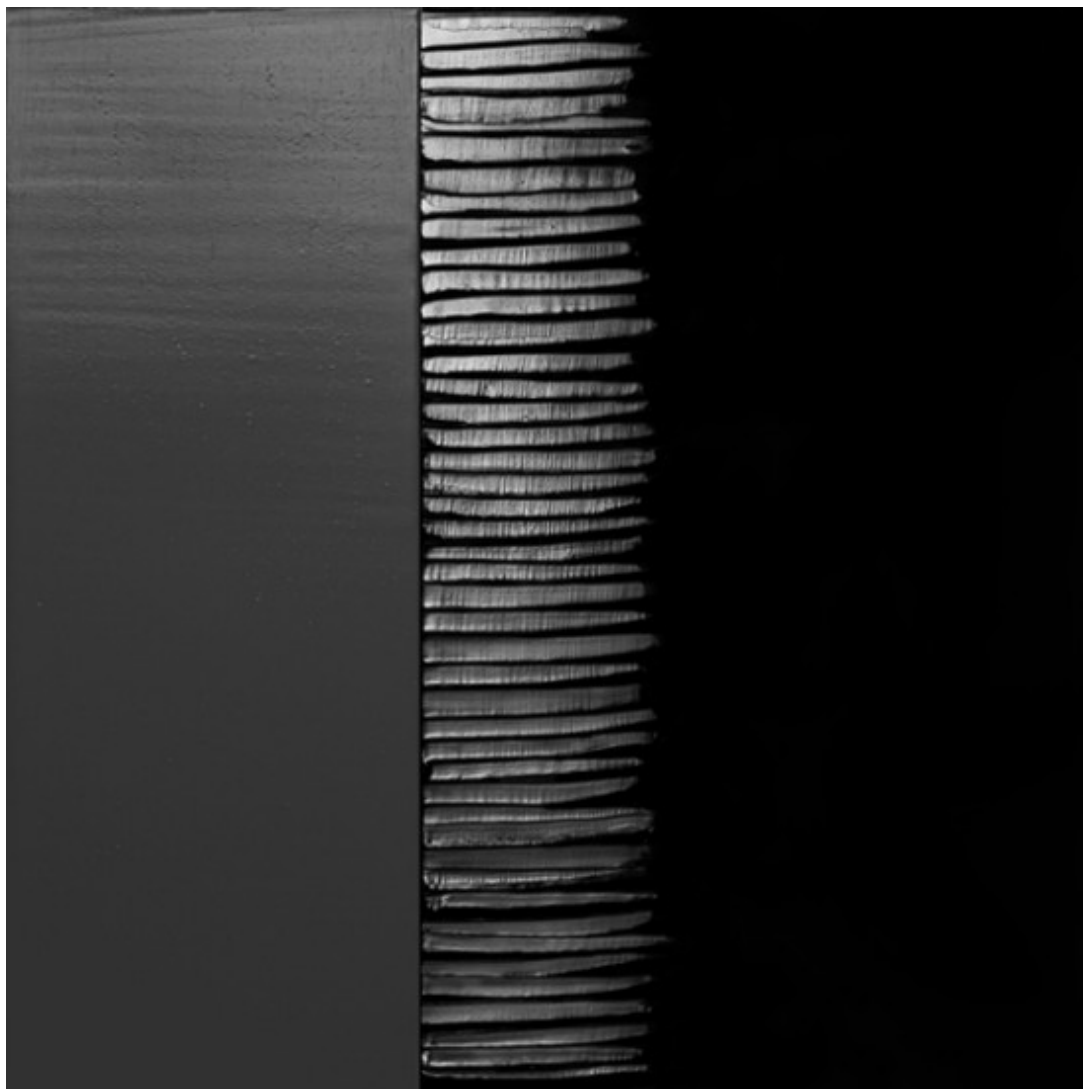




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## [Pierre Soulages, Dominique Lévy Gallery and Galerie Perrotin, New York](#)

The art of Pierre Soulages, currently on display at [Dominique Lévy Gallery](#) and [Galerie Perrotin](#), exists in another world and defies description. The show consists of three floors: new works in black acrylic on canvas from 2012 and 2013 on the first two floors and “historical” works from the 1950s and 1960s, when Soulages first gained fame in the USA, on the third floor. *Pierre Soulages* is a “proposal about post-war abstract expressionism” according to the exhibition organisers, as well as a formal call to reflect upon the opinions surrounding French art.

The new paintings are abstract in the sense of being non-referential. The titles, for example, are merely the art’s dimensions accompanied by the date of completion. And the works themselves do not make any obvious gesture toward a pictorial reality within the world. Perhaps the association with Abstract Expressionism is due to the scale of the new works, the visual traces of process and a concern with explorations of the psyche. However, for Solages, the psyche is not a personal artifact, it is a metaphysical condition which imbues reality.

Soulages acknowledges an 18,000 year history of painting and to paraphrase the artist, he uses black paint as a medium of meditation on human and cosmic origins — as well, of course, as a meditation on the origins of painting. Black is the primary color, out of which all others evolve and the texture and geometric patterning of the artist's new canvases seem to articulate a sensibility about primal ordering. Yet in the sense that the word primal has been associated with a lack of sophistication, this analogy would be false. Soulages draws one into the purity of the primal and reflects upon it as the pure blueprint out of which all else in the cosmos will come.

The work from the 1950s and 1960s is no less complex, but it shares more obvious links with The New York School. Gesture through brushstroke is bold, colours are subtle but vibrant and there is a clear process oriented and academic reasoning regarding psychic expression and its abstraction evident on the canvases. These works are radically different from the new works and yet they also serve as a logical precursor, a working on a theme which the new works ultimately manifest.

The exhibition is, in addition to the organiser's curatorial message, a call to consider the origins of Modern art, so tantalisingly rooted in the philosophical and spiritual schools of the Ancient East. It is also the revelation of a highly developed contemporary meditation on the nature of reality and the historical and logical paths that lead to knowledge. Soulages' 2012 and 2013 work operates in tandem with the currents of today's most interesting insights in theoretical physics, pushing the viewer to explore what is and could be. It sets a precedent for artistic sophistication and maturity in contemporary art.

*Pierre Soulages*, until 27 June, [Dominique Lévy Gallery](#) and [Galerie Perrotin](#), 909 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Odette Gregory

#### Credits

1. *Peinture* 202 x 202 cm, 13 septembre 2013, Oil on canvas, Credit: Soulages Archives, 2014. Photo: © Vincent Cunillère.