



Press Release
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A new and ambitious museum for Pierre Soulages due to open in his native town Rodez in 2011

Pierre Soulages, aged 89, is one of the most important French painters of the second half of the 20th century. Famous for his black all-over abstract paintings, Pierre Soulages is exhibited in museums all around the world. In 2005, he and his wife Colette, made an exceptional donation to his native town, Rodez, of about 500 works and documents of an estimated value at the time of 15 million Euros (estimated at 30 to 45 million Euros today). Out of this donation, a new and ambitious museum will open in 2011 in Rodez at the initiative of the "Agglomération du Grand Rodez". The donation made is one of the biggest in France since the Second World War. Labelled 'Museum of France', the future museum will be THE place of international reference on the work of Pierre Soulages.

The architectural conception of the future museum has recently been awarded to the Spanish architectural practice, RCR. It will be one of the few museums in the world that has been built in direct collaboration with a living artist. The thinking behind the conception of the future museum is directly referring to the specificity of the art of Soulages with Cor-Ten steel façades, volumes of spaces, use of light and colours of the raw materials.

A museum in the garden

"Building around the light" is the concept developed by RCR for the future museum which will be made of a long building from which five volumes will emerge, recalling the monoliths which had such a strong aesthetic impact on the adolescent Soulages. The whole building will total about 6,600m². From the plateau of the Foirail Park, this free-style configuration which will create framed views of the countryside, re-interprets the notion of vistas of the same, austere landscape of Aubrac that Pierre Soulages painted at the beginning of his career. The long terraces will ensure the light enters the building directly as well as having the garden at the heart of this large, impressive building.

A 'showcasing architecture' tailor made for an exceptional collection, via volume and light

The donation from Pierre et Colette Soulages characterises itself by featuring a wide diversity of work and documents which illustrate the different threads explored by the artist throughout his long career: 21 large works on canvas, 100 works on paper including the famous 'Brous de Noix', the complete printed works, bronzes and the entire collection of preparatory work for the stained glass windows at the romanic Sainte Foy de Conques abbey. For the most part, these pieces have never before left the artist's studio. The architect's tailor-made environment will reflect in its composition the diversity and originality of the works it will house. Integrating the volumetric concept of the spaces, the visitor trails, conceived as a variation on the theme of light, to the image of work of Soulages – will create a rhythm through the different heights and proportions of the rooms before putting forward the aesthetic contemplation of each type of work. The future museum will compose two types of spaces: the large rooms where the natural light will enter indirectly, lighting the works (oils on canvas, temporary exhibition galleries) and the smaller, more intimate rooms showing the graphic art (printed works and works on paper) where the works will emerge from the shadows. The space reserved for the preparatory material for the stained glass windows at Conques will receive special treatment.

Materials

Echoing the rigorous approach to painting and use of very few different elements, the architecture of the museum will use an extremely limited portfolio of materials: glass and steel. This tension towards the essential, the works and the light are in line with the research and exploration undertaken by Soulages throughout his life: extreme and harsh treatment, intense simplicity of effects and timelessness.

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