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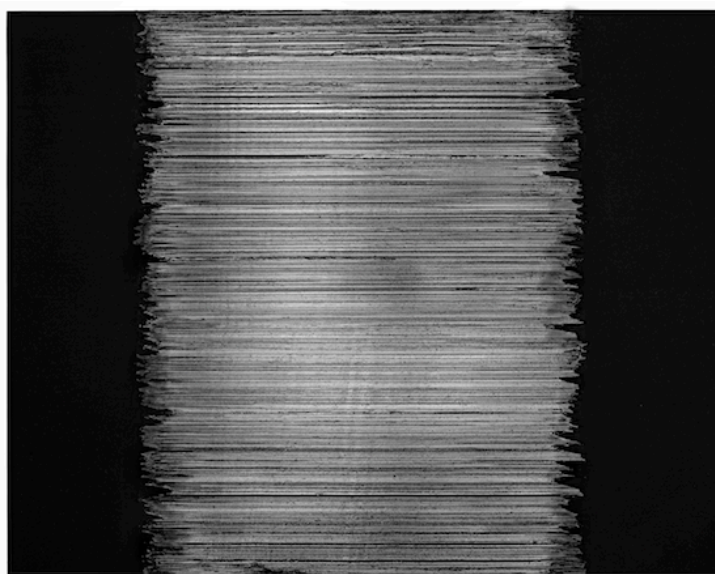
April 24, 2014

## RE-ACQUAINTING AMERICA WITH PIERRE SOULAGES



Perrotin, Lévy et Soulages

Emmanuel Perrotin and Dominique Lévy are doing everything they can to remind the art world that Pierre Soulages is alive, active and matters much more than we realize. Today their combined galleries held a press event to open a show of a dozen recent works by the 94-year-old abstract master who has been steadily at work for seventy years. Soulages himself was stuck in Rodez, France working on the opening of the Soulages Museum in the town of his birth. But true to his easy assimilation into the present-day, the artist appeared at the gathering via Skype to hold a sustained dialogues with the gallerists and crowd.



Peinture 175 x 222 cm, 23 mai 2013

Lévy and Perrotin joked about Soulages work being so of the present day. It's the usual gallery talk and the sort of thing you expect of a dealer trying to make the case for a painter's most recent work. But the top floor of the building both galleries share is a selection of works from American collections.

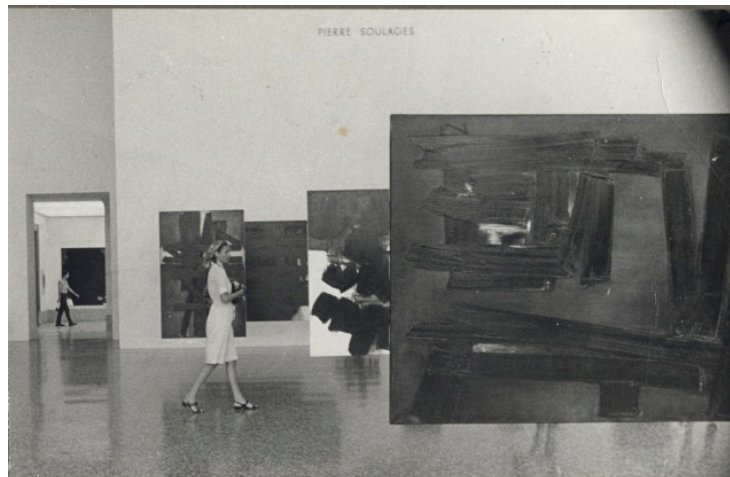


Soulages\_Peinture 202 x 159 cm, 18 octobre 1967

And Lévy went even further by commissioning *Soulages in America*, a collection of interviews and archival documents that reminds us of not only the hey day of abstract art in the post-war period when New York suddenly emerged as the center of the art world but also that Pierre Soulages was right in the thick of it. As the book points out, Soulages's primary dealer from the mid-50s to the mid-60s was in New York—and Soulages was his top artist. Sam Kootz gave Soulages 8 shows in the 12 years they worked together. Their collaboration only ended when Kootz closed his gallery but during that time Soulages's work was bought extensively in North America by many prominent collectors and celebrities.

The book reproduces a Time magazine cover of David Rockefeller showing a Soulages in the background. Charles Laughton, Alfred Hitchcock and other collectors joined numerous American museums in buying Soulages work. The painter was also a peer of the artists who could most be considered his peers, Rothko, de Kooning, and Motherwell.

This, of course, raises the question: why is Soulages valued so far below his peers? The show demonstrates that Soulages is hardly an unknown here. His work is held widely and was bought vigorously. Surely a collector seeking a very good example of abstract painting would think about buying an A+ Soulages instead of a B- work by a better known American artist from that era. Dominique Lévy certainly hopes so.



Pierre Soulages: Retrospective Exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1966