



PIERRE SOULAGES

(Rodez 1919–2022 Nîmes)

Untitled. 1973.

Gouache on paper on canvas.

Signed lower right: soulages.

75 x 54.5 cm.

The authenticity of this work has been confirmed by Pierre Encrevé. It will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné. Provenance: - Galerie de France, Paris. - Private collection, purchased from the above. Pierre Soulages has with Hans Hartung and Serge Poliakoff been instrumental in influencing an entire generation of abstract artists. In 1919 Pierre Soulages is born the son of a coachmaker in southern France. He takes an early interest in the prehistoric and Romanesque art of his surroundings, while

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the light-dark contrast in the paintings of Rembrandt and Courbet holds a great fascination for him. In the years 1938/39, he visits Paris and gets to know the works of Picasso and Cezanne, becoming increasingly interested in the art of the avant-garde. He declines his acceptance by the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, because he finds the instruction methods backward. During his military service in Montpellier he attends the École Régionale des Beaux-Arts and devotes himself after the war's end entirely to painting. With his move to Paris, he makes friends with Hans Hartung and Francis Picabia and in 1947 takes part for the first time in the Salon des Surindépendants. In 1948/49 he is one of the artists presented in the travelling exhibition "French Abstract Painting". In 1949 he has his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Lydia Conti in Paris. In the following years there are numerous single and group exhibitions in Europe and in the USA, as well as purchases by major international collections. Soulages is one of the regular exhibitors at documenta in Kassel, as well as numerous biennials. In 1957 he visits New York and gets to know Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko und Robert Motherwell. In the following year he travels to Japan and Mexico. Among his numerous awards, the Grand Prize at the Tokyo Biennial (1957), the Carnegie Prize (1964), the Rembrandt Prize in Germany (1976), as well as the Grand Prix National de Peinture in France (1986) bear mention. Pierre Soulages lives and works in Sète and Paris. The present work lives through the effective contrast of pitch-black bands with the powerful, luminous blue between them. Through the overlapping of the colours a limitless depth is obtained, so that the apparently archaic bands seem to continue into infinity. The surface treatment is to Soulages, as we see in our work, of paramount importance: through the use the squeegee, he does not paint monochrome surfaces, but achieves structured expanses. The depth is thus sustained and the entire composition radiates a calming dynamism. Soulages has always had a special relationship with the colour black because for him it is, on one hand, a true colour like yellow or red; on the other, it is essential for bringing light into his works. So he says himself: "Black is the colour that always accompanied me, which I chose even as a child for reasons unknown to me. I love black. [...] My painting has nothing

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to do with monochrome. Since 1979 my medium is not black, but rather light reflected by black – what for the viewer entails numerous spiritual implications ... Whoever believes these paintings are merely black, does not consider with his eyes, but rather with what is in his head." (exh. cat.: Pierre Soulages. Lob des Lichtes, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern 1999, p. 31).

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