

GALERIEMITTERRAND



**DEBORAH ROBERTS**  
**NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE**  
*THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES*  
26 MAY > 22 JULY 2023  
OPENING THURSDAY MAY 25, 2023

## PRESS RELEASE

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### DEBORAH ROBERTS & NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

*THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES*

26 MAY > 22 JULY 2023

SATURDAY MAY 27TH, 5:30PM

ARTIST TALK with Deborah Roberts, Bloum Cárdenas, Anne Lafont and Kathy Alliou

Galerie Mitterrand is pleased to present *Deborah Roberts and Niki de Saint Phalle: The Conversation Continues*, from May 26 to July 22, 2023. The exhibition will be the first in France for American artist Deborah Roberts, whose latest series of painting-collages entitled *Période Nègre: The Conversation Continues* has been placed in a dialogue with sculptures and works on paper by Niki de Saint Phalle. The exhibition is organized in collaboration with Gardy St Fleur.

Born in 1962 in the United States (Austin, Texas), Deborah Roberts is an African American artist who places racial identity and inequality at the heart of her work. In her collages, brimming with symbols and double meanings, the artist questions the lack of representation of Black people in art history. Roberts' politically engaged practice also enables her to deconstruct the codes of beauty and finally include Black women, who have long been excluded. She is also directly involved in current socio-political movements such as Black Lives Matter.

French-born Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002), is best known for her sculptures of imposing, corpulent female figures that she warmly referred to as Nanas (chicks). While her work is often said to have a childish aesthetic, it is not devoid of socio-political activism. The matriarch of 'high heels and lipstick-wearing feminism' through her work, Niki de Saint Phalle denounced gender-based society and the

omnipresence of the patriarchy. The artist is thus associated with the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s, the echo of which still rings clear through society today.

At first glance, we see Deborah Roberts and Niki de Saint Phalle taking similar innocent approaches to subjects of the greatest sensitivity. In their respective works, the viewer is drawn in by a naïve pop aesthetic that dissimulates a criticism with regard to representation. In this way, Galerie Mitterrand offers a unique dialogue between these two women artists, political activists, and charismatic figures who have fought to bring social and political justice to the most important causes of the past fifty years.

Deborah Roberts' latest series, *Période Nègre: The Conversation Continues*, is a reference to Picasso's African Period during which, inspired by African art, the artist revolutionized his way of painting, thus inventing cubism. As explained by Roberts, the aim of this exhibition is to "continue this conversation fifty years after his death by exploring the patterns, textures and history of the African people who inspired Picasso."

Increasing the breadth of this conversation, the works of Niki de Saint Phalle – notably her famous 'Nanas' including *La Patineuse* (1967), *Nana fontaine type* (1967), and her silkscreen print *Black is Different* (1994) – bear witness to the artist's unwavering desire to create inclusive works that raise questions concerning the representation of identity throughout art history.



**- DEBORAH ROBERTS -**

Deborah Roberts was born in Austin, Texas, USA in 1962 where she continues to live and work. Combining collage with mixed media, Deborah Roberts' figurative works depict the complexity of Black subjecthood and explore themes of race, identity and gender politics.

Roberts' use of collage reflects the challenges encountered by young Black children as they strive to build their identity, particularly as they respond to preconceived social constructs perpetuated by the Black community, the white gaze and visual culture at large. Combining a range of different facial features, skin tones, hairstyles and clothes, Roberts explains that "with collage, I can create a more expansive and inclusive view of the Black cultural experience."

The artist's major touring exhibition 'I'm' opened at The Contemporary Austin, Texas in January 2021, following the installation of her first outdoor public mural there in September 2020. The show travelled to Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Colorado; Art + Practice in collaboration with California African American Museum, Los Angeles, California and Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, Jacksonville, Florida (2021–22).



**- NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE -**

Niki de Saint Phalle is a Franco-American artist who began her career as a painter in 1950. Her work quickly moved towards assemblages, reliefs, and sculpture. In 1961, she became a member of the Nouveaux Réalistes group. The Tirs [Shootings] from the early 1960s were quickly followed in 1965 by the sexy, curvaceous, feminine sculptures she called Nanas. Then her art moved to exterior spaces with large, bright, colourful sculptures, some of which created in collaboration with Jean Tinguely: Le Cyclop in Milly-la-Forêt, La Fontaine Stravinsky next to the Pompidou Centre in Paris and her masterpiece The Tarot Garden in Italy.

The first retrospective was dedicated to Niki de Saint Phalle's work was held at the Pompidou Centre, Paris in 1980. Recently, her work has been exhibited at the Grand Palais in Paris in 2014, at MoMA PS1 in New York in 2020, and at the Menil Collection in Houston and at the MCASD in San Diego in 2022. Her works are included in some very prestigious museum collections: the Pompidou Centre, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Tate, London; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C.; the MoMA, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.



**Deborah Roberts**

*Let your root feed your crown, 2023*

Mixed media on canvas

H 177.8 x 177.8 cm / H 70 x 70 in

Unique

**Deborah Roberts**

*Holding Complexity*, 2023

Mixed media on canvas

H 165.1 x 137.2 cm / H 65 x 54 in

Unique





**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro un, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique

**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro deux, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique



**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro trois, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique







**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro quatre, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique



**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro cinq, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique

**Deborah Roberts**

*Numéro six, 2023*

Mixed media on paper

H 76.2 x 55.9 cm / H 30 x 22 in

Unique



**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*Patineuse*, c. 1967

Painted polyester on metal base

H 200 x 115 cm / H 78 3/4 x 45 1/4 in

Unique





**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*Nana fontaine type*, ca. 1967

Painted polyester resin and iron base

H 137 x 150 x 84 cm / H 54 x 59 x 33 ½ in

Unique



**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*Nana Blanche Dansante (Fontaine Type)*, 1971

Painted polyester resin on iron base

H 100 x 147 x 56 cm / H 39 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 57 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 22 in

Unique

**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*Le Poète et sa muse*, 1976

Painted polyester

H 50 x 23 x 15 cm / H 19 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 x 5 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in

Unique



**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*La Femme (Portrait of Mimi) or Clarissa, 1995*

Signed

Silkscreen

H 65 x 50 cm / H 25 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 19 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in

Edition of 100



Niki de Saint Phalle





**Niki de Saint Phalle**

*California Diary (Black is different)*, 1994

Screenprint in colours

H 80 x 120 cm / H 31 ½ x 47 ¼ in

Edition of 100, n°74/100

**Practical information:**

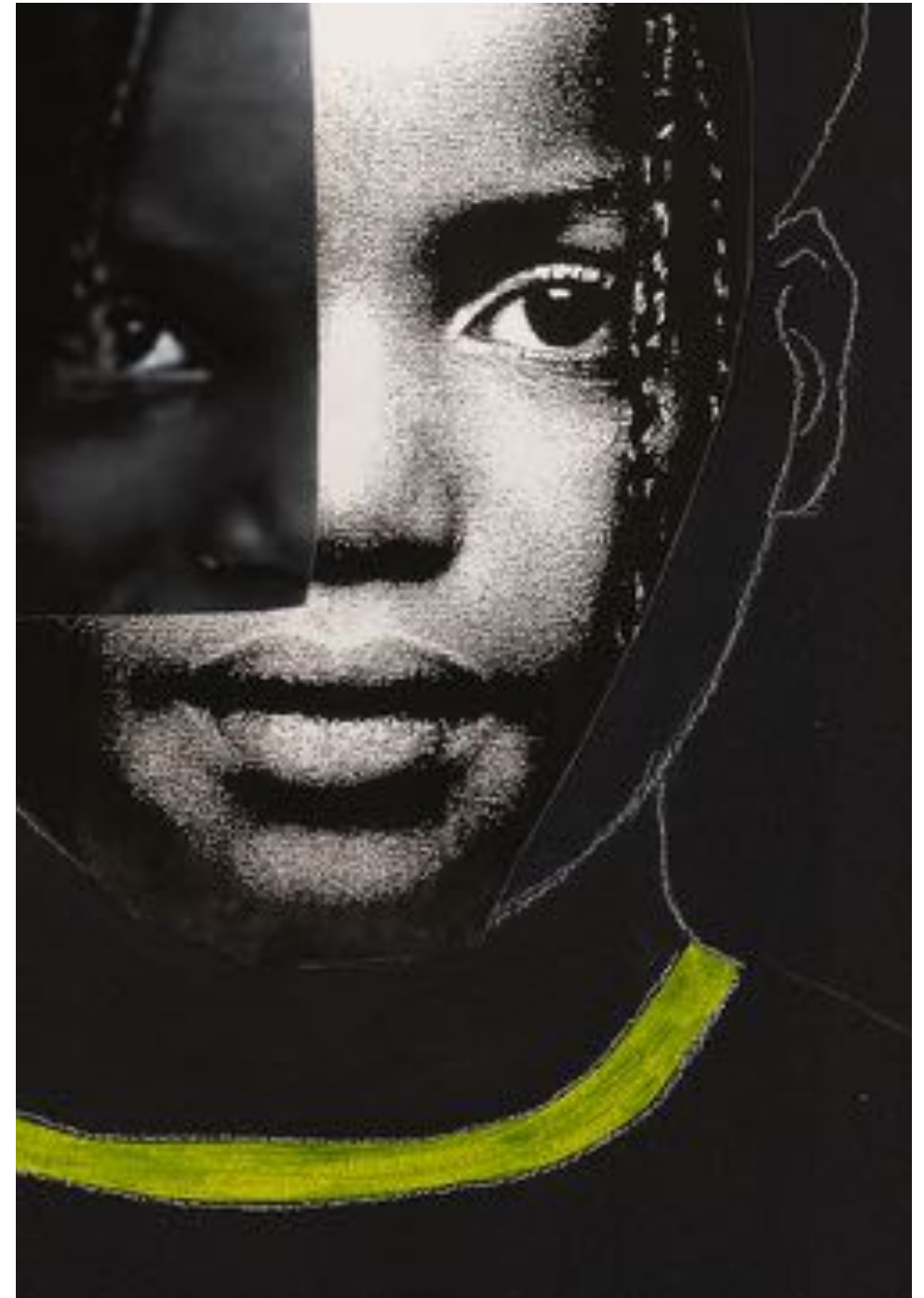
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**Opening hours:**

From Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 7pm and Monday by appointment

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