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# NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

MYTHOLOGY

06.06 - 26.07.2025

From Tuesday to Saturday, from 11am to 7pm

Opening Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup> 2025 from 6pm to 8:30pm  
95, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris VIII<sup>e</sup>

## PRESS RELEASE

Mitterrand is pleased to present a new exhibition of works by Franco-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle from June 6 to July 26, 2025, in both its Paris galleries.

Entitled *Mythology*, this exhibition brings together works from the 1960s to 2000 and explores the artist's iconography and the symbols that underlie it. The Nanas remain Niki de Saint Phalle's emblem, but many other figures populate her work. Whether animals, monsters or hybrids, her figures often derive from mythology and tend towards a double meaning.

The snake in particular occupies a central role in Niki de Saint Phalle's work. A recurring motif in the artist's bestiary since the 60s, it is at once associated with sin and new life, a savior animal but also

a cursed beast, its omnipresence calls for a form of transcendence of the violence of nightmares and traumas. She recalls: "I was born terrified of snakes. Snakes are imbued with a bewitching mystery. At the zoo, I loved trembling in front of them. To me, they represented life, an indomitable primitive force. By making snakes myself, I was able to turn my fear of them into joy. Through my art, I learned to tame and harness these creatures that terrorized me."

Drawn from various mythological traditions, Niki de Saint Phalle's subjects are imbued with a rich and abundant symbolic imagination. Her work conjures up references to Greek, Egyptian and Christian legends, as well as figures associated with esotericism. These multiple iconographies

nourish a singular dreamlike universe, within which the artist gradually fashions her own mythology.

For Niki de Saint Phalle, mythology becomes a tool for reappropriation: she revisits ancient tales to offer a personal reading. By redefining popular myths, she makes them a reflection of her own intimate experience and preoccupations, while infusing them with new meanings. Her work tackles major themes such as women's emancipation and the fight against injustice.

The *Tarot Garden*, built in Italy from 1979 to 1993, is a tangible embodiment of Niki de Saint Phalle's mythological universe. Inspired by Gaudí, the gardens of Bomarzo and the Palais du Facteur Cheval, Niki de Saint Phalle has assembled 22 monumental sculptures representing the major arcana of the Tarot of Marseille. Each work, both architectural and sculptural, incarnates an aspect of her personal vision of the world, combining symbolism, spirituality and reflection on the human condition.

Some of the works presented at the gallery are scale models of the monumental works in the *Tarot Garden*. These include the Snake Tree (1988), *The Hanged Man* (1988) and *Adam and Eve* (1985).

*Nature, dragons, monsters and  
the animals of my artistic imagination  
kept me in touch with  
my childhood emotions. In me, the child  
and the artist are inseparable.<sup>1</sup>*

The exhibition *Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Pontus Hultén*, a co-production between the Centre Pompidou and the Grand Palais, opens to the public on June 20th. The exhibition retraces the prolific career of both artists through the eyes of Pontus Hultén.

Born on October 29th, 1930 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, Niki de Saint Phalle enjoyed her first retrospective 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.

## REFERENCES

1. Niki de Saint Phalle, *Traces. Une autobiographie, Remembering 1930-1949*, p. 69.

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