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WHAT TO BOOK: NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE AT OTCA

From objects for the home to large-scale sculptures, marvel at the breadth and experimentation of the French artist's work

BY FRANCES HEDGES 9 JUNE 2016



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'Je Suis Une Vache Suisse' (1991) by Niki de Saint Phalle. Image courtesy of Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art

Whether imbued with passionate rage, playful eccentricity or pure exuberance, Niki de Saint Phalle's works share a wonderful vibrancy that comes across strongly in Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art's latest exhibition, which charts the development of her oeuvre from the 1950s to her death in 2002.

Curated by Helen Pheby of Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 'Je Suis Une Vache Suisse' collates a broad range of pieces by the French artist, who rose to fame in the early 1960s following the success of her *Shooting Paintings* series, created by firing at a combination of canvases and paint containers.

The changes in Saint Phalle's artistic practice to some extent reflect the evolution of her personal life. Following a nervous breakdown in the early 1950s that stemmed from difficult experiences (including being sexually abused by her father), her early work was very much part of a cathartic process and feels almost raw, whereas the celebratory style of her later art reflects her growing sense of control as a woman.

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'Serpent et Déesses' by Niki de Saint Phalle. Image courtesy of Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art



'La question' (1984) by Niki de Saint Phalle. Image courtesy of Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art

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The exhibition, which features a number of works that have not previously been shown to the public, illustrates the breadth of Saint-Phalle's output, which draws not only on personal experiences but also on mythical motifs and the natural world, the latter seen in pieces such as *Gorilla* (undated) and *Monkey with Child* (1995).

Encompassing sculptures, works on paper, reliefs, jewellery and objects for the home, the exhibition offers an important insight into the life and work of one of the 20th century's pre-eminent artists.



'All Over' (1959-60) by Niki de Saint Phalle. Image courtesy of Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art

'Niki de Saint Phalle: Je Suis Une Vache Suisse' is on from 17 June to 10 September at Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art, 21 Conduit Street, London W1.

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