

After four years of work, the Grand Palais, an emblematic Parisian monument, gradually reopened for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024.

It hosts exhibitions and events as part of a generous, festive program organized by the GrandPalaisRmn.

In 2025, the Centre Pompidou begins its metamorphosis. Its iconic building, located in the Beaubourg district of Paris, will undergo a thorough renovation, which by 2030, will allow it to reconnect with its original utopia. During this unprecedented period, the spirit of the Centre Pompidou will continue to thrive through its Constellation programme, which offers a vast array of exhibitions, live shows, films, meetings and workshops in France and abroad.

The GrandPalaisRmn and the Centre Pompidou are thrilled that the Grand Palais takes on such a central role in this Constellation.

Practical Information

Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 7.30pm

Late opening Friday until 10pm

Grand Palais, entrance:
Square Jean Perrin, Galleries 3 and 4

Rates

Full rate: €17

Reduced rate: €14 (Membership holders, 18-25 year-olds, students up to age 30, large families)

Group rate: €48 (Group of 4 people including 2 people aged 18-25)

Free (Under 18 year-olds, jobseekers, visitors with a disability, GrandPalais Pass, Pop Card)

Tours and Workshops

To get any information on tours and workshops organised by Centre Pompidou, visit the website: <https://www.centrepompidou.fr>

To get any information on tours and workshops organised by Grand Palais, visit the website: <https://www.grandpalais.fr>

Publications

Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Pontus Hulten | Exhibition catalogue
Under the direction of Sophie Duplaix
336 p., €45 (Autumn 2025)

Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Pontus Hulten | Exhibition journal
Sophie Duplaix
24 p., €6 (Only in French)

Podcast

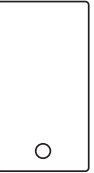
If you want to take things further and learn more about the exhibition, the podcast discusses the incredible artistic adventure between friends Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely and Pontus Hulten. The audio documentary explores the story of the three protagonists through the archives and words of Bloum Cardenas, Niki de Saint Phalle’s granddaughter and witness to this history, Sophie Duplaix, exhibition curator, and Andres Pardey, co-director of the Tinguely Museum in Basel.

The transcript of the podcast is free to download on the Centre Pompidou website.

The podcast is available in French and English on the Centre Pompidou website and the Grand Palais application

Application mobile du Grand Palais

Available on the App Store and Google Play (French, English), it’s an indispensable tool for keeping abreast of the latest news, preparing your visit and experiencing exhibitions and events at the Grand Palais to the full. It offers guided tours of the building and exhibitions at the Grand Palais.



Download the Grand Palais application and find all the audioguide tours for the exhibition

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Share #SaintPhalleTinguelyHulten



Exhibition

Curator: Sophie Duplaix, Curator in Chief of Contemporary Collections, Musée National d’Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou

Assistant curator: Rita Cusimano, conservation officer, Musée National d’Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou

Production manager: Anna De Cassin, Centre Pompidou

Architect scenographer: Laurence Fontaine, Centre Pompidou

Graphist: Lacasta Design


Sponsors and media partners

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Niki de Saint Phalle Jean Tinguely Pontus Hulten

Taking a historic and entertaining approach, this exhibition highlights the relationships between three major figures of 20th-century art: two passionate, rebellious artists, Franco-American Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) and Jean Tinguely from Switzerland (1925-1991), and an exceptional museum curator from Sweden, Pontus Hulten (1924-2006).

Love and friendship, audacity, the challenges they set each other, reciprocal influences and solidarity during trying times shaped the amazing careers of the three protagonists as they created spectacular works and original projects. Presented here in ten chapters, they are all unique adventures experienced in a spirit of freedom, commitment and anarchism, as well as complicity and joy.

The rich Centre Pompidou collection, combined with major loans from French and foreign institutions, affords a chance to discover or rediscover Jean Tinguely’s animated sound machines and Niki de Saint Phalle’s colourful sculptures and reliefs. Rare films from the archives and precious correspondence in illustrated letters also guide the exploration of these ambitious projects, sometimes of titanic proportions, by the two artists, encouraged or supported by Pontus Hulten, a ground-breaking museum director who defied convention and the first director of the Musée National d’Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou.

Interview

Sophie Duplaix, Curator in Chief of Contemporary Collections, Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou

The public knows about Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle, their close relationship and their works. What role did Pontus Hulten play?

S.D: Pontus Hulten had the same attitude towards art and life as Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely, an attitude you could call "joyful anarchy". The aim was mainly to offer individuals a place in society, marked by autonomy of thought and action. This took the form of a rebellious art, addressing the public directly and offering them accessible, participatory works that were fun.

What connections did Pontus Hulten have with artists in general, and with Tinguely/ Saint Phalle in particular?

S.D: Pontus Hulten understood artists perfectly, as he had been one himself! It is said that his encounter with Tinguely, whose way of including movement in his works Hulten admired, made him give up the idea of pursuing a career in art. He was to become the defender of artists, always with an attentive ear, letting them express their ideas, desires and wishes, and giving them the benefit of his encyclopaedic knowledge. As an art professional, he was able to offer them venues in which to exhibit and opportunities to acquire and produce works.

In which works did Pontus Hulten play a major role?

S.D: The most exemplary collaboration was "Hon - en katedral" at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the artists' response to Hulten's invitation to exhibit in his museum, in 1966. Imagine a giant sculpture of a pregnant woman/fertility goddess taking up an entire room of the Swedish institution, lying on her back, that you could enter through

her vagina to discover a whole animated world of fun. In this adventure, Hulten not only provided the artists with a space to create the work, but he also "got his hands dirty" helping them make the sculpture, which was finished incredibly in just a few weeks. Another example of Hulten's essential role was Le Paradis fantastique, created by Saint Phalle and Tinguely in 1967 for the French Pavilion at the Montreal Universal Exhibition. This ensemble of monumental sculptures was at risk of being destroyed after being displayed. Hulten was called to the rescue by the artists and agreed to raise the funding needed to repatriate the work to Europe, on the condition that it be donated to his museum in Stockholm!

The exhibition presents the correspondence between the two artists and Hulten. What does it reveal?

S.D: The correspondence happily reveals the high degree of intimacy between the artists and Pontus Hulten. In a single letter, you can find discussion of a work or exhibition and pressing requests when the artists needed help, alongside comments on more trivial subjects, always with plenty of humour and simplicity. The letters often head in all directions, with Tinguely's writing mixing with Saint Phalle's or vice versa, all adorned with sketches, drawings and collages. These exchanges clearly show the extent to which art and life were intrinsically linked for the three protagonists.

A story of encounters

Pontus Hulten first met Jean Tinguely in 1954, while on one of his frequent trips to Paris, at Tinguely's first personal exhibition in a gallery. Hulten had studied art history in his home city of Stockholm where he sometimes worked for the National Museum of Fine Arts. He also produced artwork of his own. His fascination for Tinguely's work and the way it incorporated movement gradually convinced him to give up his own art. Tinguely had arrived in France from Switzerland in 1952 and live in Impasse Ronsin in Paris. In 1956, he met Niki de Saint Phalle, working in a studio she had been loaned there. In 1960, Tinguely and Saint Phalle embarked on a love affair. Tinguely introduced his new partner to Hulten.

Pontus Hulten, Museum Man. The Moderna Museet, Stockholm

Pontus Hulten started out as a museum curator in 1949 on a temporary contract with the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, where he was then hired in 1957. He took part in the development of the department of modern art that was to become the Moderna Museet of Stockholm in 1958. He took on scientific responsibility. Thanks to his innovative policies towards the general public, he succeeded in forging an international reputation for the museum. His strategy of enriching the collections enabled him to bring in masterpieces of modern art, as well as several works by Saint Phalle and Tinguely.

Pontus Hulten, Museum Man. The Centre Pompidou, Paris

Hulten was invited to Paris in 1973 to play an active role in prefiguring the future Centre Pompidou. He was then appointed as the first director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou, which opened to the public in 1977. Hulten continued to promote the work of Tinguely and Saint Phalle. The two artists embodied the spirit of openness to life that Hulten aspired to for the museum. His idea of an arts institution catering to the general public, in which all art forms were to rub shoulders in a playful, productive dynamic, had much in common with Saint Phalle's and Tinguely's mindset, as they propounded art for all, as a part of life.

Pontus Hulten, Museum Man. The Museum Tinguely, Basel

When Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely decided to get married in 1971, they were not really romantically involved anymore, yet they each felt that they were best placed to defend the artistic legacy of the other if ever one of them should disappear. When Tinguely died in 1991, Saint Phalle must decide on the fate of a museum dedicated to his work, choosing between two projects. One was the anti-museum conceived by Tinguely, which had already taken shape in a gigantic warehouse, La Verrerie, in the countryside in Switzerland. The other, more conventional project could be launched in Basel, thanks to the support of Tinguely's art collector friend Paul Sacher. Saint Phalle opted for this second solution with support from Pontus Hulten, who became the first director of Museum Tinguely in 1996.

The "Rörelse i konsten" [Movement in Art] exhibition, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1961

The question of movement in art fascinated Hulten, who sought to document its history throughout his career. He plans to present an exhibition on this theme at Stockholm's Moderna Museet, in collaboration with Willem Sandberg, Director of Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, artist Daniel Spoerri, Tinguely and engineer Billy Klüver. It featured some 30 works by Tinguely, while Niki de Saint Phalle could highlight her totally innovative work on the Tirs by organising performances at each stage of the exhibition's itinerary.

Hon - en katedral [She – a Cathedral], Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1966

Invited by Hulten to produce a large-scale project in his museum, Saint Phalle, Tinguely and the Swedish artist Per Olof Ultvedt met in Stockholm without any specific ideas. They finally agreed to build a gigantic Nana (Girl) in the spirit of those that Saint Phalle had started creating. Depicted lying down and pregnant, she was created on a monumental scale in a matter of weeks, with the help of Hulten. Visitors were to enter via the vagina to discover a whole animated world: actual sculptures, a gallery of fake paintings, a cinema, a slide, a goldfish pond... The work was then destroyed as planned at the end of the exhibition, having enjoyed considerable success.

The Cyclop, Milly-la-Forêt, 1969-1994

In the late 1960s, Tinguely, Saint Phalle and the Swiss artist Bernhard Luginbühl imagined secretly producing a gigantic head, a "monster", in the thick of the forest in the south of Paris. This gigantic edifice took 25 years to make. Tinguely oversaw the construction and asked several artist friends to display their work inside the out-sized sculpture. After it was vandalised, the artists donated the work to the French government in 1987. It was opened to the public in 1994, once Saint Phalle had finally completed it according to Tinguely's instructions after his death, with help from Hulten.

"Le Crocrodrome de Zig & Puce", Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1977

In 1977, Hulten invited Tinguely, Saint Phalle and Luginbühl, along with other participants, to produce a playful, spectacular project in the Forum of the Centre Pompidou. Le Crocrodrome de Zig & Puce is a collective work in the form of a gigantic monster some 30 metres long. It was animated from its jaw, designed by Saint Phalle, to its intestines, by Luginbühl, by way of its back, designed by Tinguely. Its stomach was a ghost train, and a circuit of metal balls ran all the way through. The public was able to watch the work in progress, as well as its destruction after seven months of frantic activity. Hulten had pulled off the feat of providing visitors with pure moments of entertainment while taking ownership of a work within the museum institution embodied by the Centre Pompidou.

The "Tinguely" exhibition, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1988-1989

In 1972, Hulten wrote a monograph on Jean Tinguely's work, isolating himself for a year. In 1988, having just been recalled as a consultant to the presidency of the Centre Pompidou, he brought to Paris the Tinguely retrospective he had put together as artistic director for the Palazzo Grassi in Venice the previous year. His 1972 monography served as a reference for the various versions of the catalogue of this travelling exhibition. For the Paris exhibition, Tinguely added a new series, Les Philosophes (The Philosophers).

The "Niki de Saint Phalle" exhibition, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1980

For her 1980 retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Niki de Saint Phalle selected works from all her series. The exhibition also highlighted the monumental dimension of several of her projects, through photographs, drawings and models. The exhibition poster featured a colourful drawing of a woman in suspenders, unflinchingly feminine. The exhibition challenged convention, but attracted open-minded visitors willing to embrace new ideas, encouraged by the Centre Pompidou's openness.

Epilogue

Before his death in 1991, Jean Tinguely had fully orchestrated his spectacular funeral in his hometown of Fribourg himself. Niki de Saint Phalle paid homage with a new series of works, the Tableaux éclatés (Shattered Paintings). As the artist's widow, she found herself in charge of managing his estate but she consulted him on many major decisions. In 1993, Saint Phalle's fragile health prompted her to move back to the US in California. She remained in close contact with Hulten through to her death in 2002. Hulten died in 2006, leaving behind him the image of an exceptional museum curator and untiring defender of the artists.

Plans

