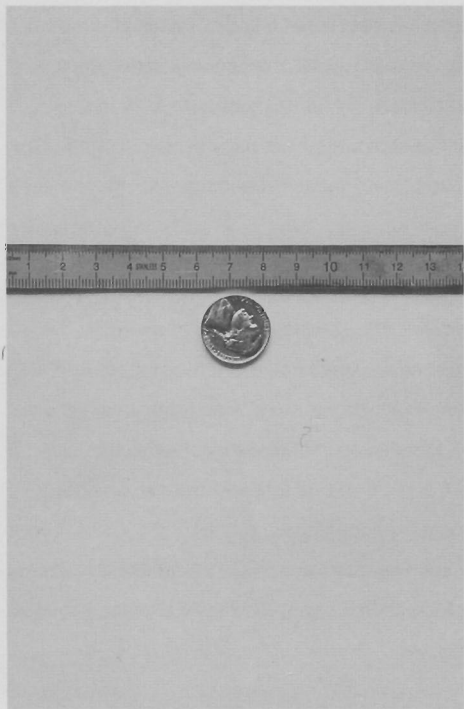


Jean-Luc Moulène

Opus + One



Dia:Beacon, Riggio Galleries

3 Beekman Street Beacon New York

December 17, 2011–December 31, 2012

The Dan Flavin Art Institute

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Jean-Luc Moulène Opus + One

Since the early 1980s, Jean-Luc Moulène has developed a body of work informed by a critical investigation of authorship as well as issues of autonomy, immanence, and anarchic politics. Although he is best known for his enigmatic, large-format photographs, over the course of the past decades, Moulène has maintained a parallel exploration of materials—manufactured and found, industrial and organic—that he has collectively titled *Opus*.

Traditionally, the Latin word *opus*, meaning “work,” has been used to identify musical compositions, providing a system for ordering the complete output of an artist. Although in Moulène’s case individual pieces are identified with precise titles and accompanied by the month, year, and city in which the object was fabricated, his use of the term *opus* alludes to the unique characteristics these works hold within his practice, as well as to the process of production and recurrence of these objects, which total just under one hundred to date. Although selections from the *Opus* series have been exhibited—first in 2007 in Lisbon, and again in 2009 in Paris and Nîmes—the full scope of their resonance and correspondence with Moulène’s broader artistic enterprise has not been examined until now.

After obtaining a degree in art and literature at the Sorbonne University in Paris in 1976, Moulène worked on and off with performance, although photography and drawing, because of their portability and compactness, were his most practiced mediums throughout the 1990s. Yet another form of creative output took form in the early 1980s, when he worked as an “artistic consultant” for the military manufacturer Thomson-Sintra. Moulène would spend almost a decade designing product presentations and learning about organizational hierarchies and industrial secrets. There, surrounded by engineers and factory workers rather than by artists, he retooled a slightly altered definition of what it means to be an artist. Meanwhile, his authorial voice was pointedly influenced through his encounters with the poetry of René Daumal and the irreverent work of Michel Journiac.

Opus + One brings together thirty-nine objects from the *Opus* series (1995–present) and the photographic work *La Vigie* (2004–11), part of a broader series titled

Documents (1985–present), which also includes *Objets de grève* (1999–2000) and *48 Palestinian Products* (2002–5), in which Moulène strategically depicted, respectively, inventories of personal collections of artifacts manufactured by workers on strike and assortments of consumer goods illegally imported from Palestine. The pairing of these two bodies of work reveals, among other things, Moulène’s interest in the overlaps of the social and the political, and in systems and orders—geometry, mathematics, social sciences, and human behavior—as well as his inquiry into the plasticity of materials.

The main gallery at Dia:Beacon is dedicated to the *Opus* works. Beginning with the wall piece *Head Box* (2004) to the left, the installation starts with an acknowledgment of the viewer’s body as part of a collective body. Emphasizing a horizontal scanning of the room on the part of the viewer, the works have been installed in a grid of tables whose interrelating axes undermine predictable classifications of figuration and abstraction. Moulène’s objects—some handmade and some industrially manufactured—employ a diverse array of natural and manmade materials, including bronze, cement, fiberglass, plaster, tobacco, and wood. The physical experience of Moulène’s *Opus* is highly informed by the materials and also by their scale. His decision to display each object on a table or a slab of concrete on the floor, rejecting the common pedestal or plinth, accentuates a relationship to prototypes or scale models. Indeed, the objects’ tabletop dimensions in certain instances grant them the quality of being *maquettes*, or architectural models for potential monuments (*Tricolore*, 2009) or buildings (*Model for Sharing*, 2007).

A certain sense of abstraction may be found in Moulène’s three-dimensional work, which is predicated on a set of speculative principles. Once constructed these works provide ambitious, unimaginable forms that playfully compromise representation. Like many of his predecessors, from Donald Judd to Michelangelo Pistoletto, Moulène has declined to use the term *sculpture*, choosing *object* instead. This semantic preference affirms Moulène’s kinship with the common and the habitual in his quest for an alternative process of creation that relates most closely to the act of issuing a manifesto. Each of the *Opus* works offer a different formal response from the alternative that

preceded it. "People have spoken of the image-object," Moulène says. "I speak of image and object, of photograph and product, both transformed. What interests me are the functions of transformation. What then is an ordinary object? What orders organize it, construct and transform it? In concrete terms, the question comes down to: can one produce any nondescript [*quelconque*] object with exactitude?"¹

Moulène's interest in transformation takes on new dimensions in the next gallery, which is dedicated to a single oversized *Opus* titled *Body* (2011). The colossal scale of the form—an exception to the majority of Moulène's proposals—masks the modesty of its origins. According to sketches and three-dimensional renderings in the artist's studio, *Body* was generated by Moulène's recent focus on topological structures or what is known in mathematics as bifurcation theory (an interest that appears also in *Fig. Bifur.* [*Bifurcated Figure*] and *Etude pour Body—maquette III*, 2009). Moulène worked closely with a group of automotive engineers at the Renault manufacturing plant in Guyancourt, France, to generate the molds for the twelve bands that together produce the overall form.

"Making a work from cuts," as the artist describes it, has been a recurring method and process whereby Moulène interrogates the notion of a unifying whole. In this instance, the lines that "cut" apart the whole are joined together without the need for an interior structure. The space inside *Body* is implicitly empty, and for Moulène it recalls Antonin Artaud's "body without organs," from his infamous 1947 radio play *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*.² Moulène's *Body* is a vehicle without a motor—a shell, an autonomous carcass freed from function, and therefore infused with inevitable subjectivity and receptivity. It is not incidental that there are no visible openings in *Body* that might allow a peek into its interior. On the contrary, there are only seamless cuts that merge so tightly into one another as to become illegible, creating a plasticity of surface that is at once familiar and yet uncanny. Moulène has frequently maintained that "negation is the founding act of creation," arguing that "you need to be able to articulate a negative position with a position of affirmation in the outside world: if creating is negation, showing is an act of affirmation."³ The manufactured surface of *Body*, which infuses the artwork with the technical semantics of

automobiles and with the alienated labor of assembly-line workers, offers the "negation" that Moulène considers to be a condition of art.

The third gallery at Dia:Beacon contains *La Vigie*, a photographic work centered on a single subject: *Paulownia tomentosa*, an ornamental plant generally known as the "Princess Tree," which grows in the cracks of sidewalks and buildings. Comprising 299 photographs, printed in color and in black-and-white, the work chronicles, over the span of seven years, the evolving appearance of one such plant in the Parisian neighborhood surrounding the Ministry for the Economy, Industry, and Employment. *La Vigie*, which roughly translates as "The Lookout Man," borrows part of its title from the official name of France's national security system known as the *Vigipirate*.

Parallel to Moulène's documentation of the ever-shifting urban landscape of barricades, stanchions, and bollards is the reciprocal "gaze" of the plant: an outsider, camouflaged within the topography of the city, and growing despite the hostility of its environs. The images are organized in two rows: the top one focusing chronologically and continuously on the plant, and the bottom one focusing randomly and discontinuously on the plant's surroundings. This strategy of opposition recalls the artist's earlier work *Disjonctions* (*Disjunctions*) (1985–89), which employed an operation of "disjunctions that declare a rupture with continuity in favor of discontinuity and ultimately difference,"⁴ the idea being that knowledge in the street and knowledge in the studio are the same: formulations, prophecies, and proposals that generate new forms in real time and space. The systematic classification and documentation found in *La Vigie* resonate with the overriding principle governing the installation in the *Opus* gallery.

The last section of the exhibition, located at the Dan Flavin Art Institute in Bridgehampton, New York, is dedicated to a newly commissioned work titled *Monochromes/Samples* (2011), which is part of an ongoing series of single-color wall-objects painted in signature hues (black, blue, red, green) that examine the notion of industrial "standards." Using a palette knife to apply the "paint," in this instance Bic[®] liquid ink, and treating the physical qualities of the ink as malleable

matter, Moulène renders glossy surfaces of furtive tactility. Moulène's inked boards appear to pay homage to Flavin's own study of the standardized products—fluorescent lamps—that would become his preferred medium in the creation of his light environments. The monochrome, nevertheless, is a recurring motif in Moulène's work, dating back to the *Disjonctions* series, when he made *Le grand monochrome rouge* and *Le monochrome jaune Kodak*, and later on in the multipart *Opus* entitled *Bleu Gauloises bleus* (2000), included in the presentation at Dia:Beacon.

Anticipation plays a crucial role both in the creative process and in the viewing experience. Between the poles of an intuitive pursuit of the unknown and the precision of a premeditated approach lies a type of work that is ever-pending and in a state of constant calibration. In Moulène's work, anticipation extends beyond the working process into what appears to be an uninterrupted state of perpetual becoming—a continuous event that postpones resolution on the part of the viewer. In all its forms—still and moving images, tabletop objects, and freestanding floor pieces—Moulène's work is informed by a vigorous investigation into the realm of the possible, animated by, as the artist has stated, "the desire to attempt to describe the world" yet without authorizing a finite conclusion.⁵

—Yasmil Raymond, Curator, Dia Art Foundation

notes

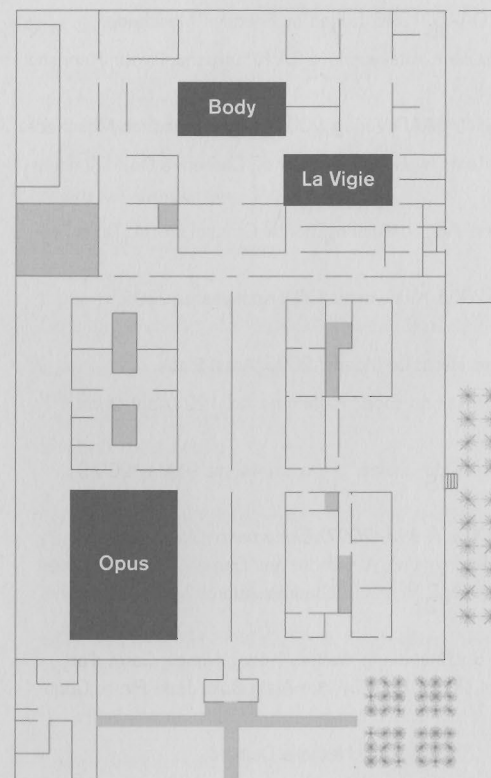
- 1 Jean-Luc Moulène, interview with Briony Fer, in *Jean-Luc Moulène* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König; Nîmes: Carré d'art—Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, 2009), p. 139.
- 2 See *To Have Done with the Judgment of God (Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu)* in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Helen Weaver (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
- 3 Moulène, interview with Fer, p. 134.
- 4 Jean-Luc Moulène, in conversation with the author in New York, November 21, 2011.
- 5 Jean-Luc Moulène, in conversation with the author in New York, November 11, 2010.

Jean-Luc Moulène was born in 1955. He studied Aesthetics and Sciences of Art at the Sorbonne University, Paris, and completed his degree in 1976. He held his first official solo exhibition *Œuvres* at Galerie J & J Donguy, Paris, in 1989. By the mid-2000s, Moulène had gained international recognition for his photographic works, including *Objets de grève* (1999–2000) and *48 Palestinian Products* (2002–5). Over the past three decades, Moulène has held solo exhibitions at international venues such as Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève (2003); CCA, Center for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu, Japan (2004); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2005); Culturgest, Lisbon (2007); and Carré d'art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France (2009). In 1996 he participated in the DAAD: Berliner Künstlerprogramm. Among many group shows, he has participated in Documenta X, Kassel (1997); São Paulo Bienal (2002); Venice Biennale (2003); Taipei Biennial (2004); 1st International Image Biennial, Laos (2007); and most recently the Sharjah Biennial (2010). *Opus + One* marks Moulène's first solo exhibition in North America. Moulène lives and works in Paris.

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site map



Opus Gallery

				36	37
31	32	33	34	35	
26	27	28	29	30	
21	22	23	24	25	
20					
15	16	17	18	19	
8	9	10 11	12 13	14	
2	3	4	5	6	7
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checklist

Height precedes length precedes width

Opus Gallery

- 1 **Head Box**, Kitakyushu, October 2004
enamel paint, wood
8¼ x 7⅞ x 8⅞ inches
Collection Kadist Art Foundation, Paris
- 2 **Soleil noir (Black Sun)**, Paris, September 2008
video transferred to DVD, silent
color, 2:26 minutes looped
Video edited by Ziad Antar
Edition of six, exhibition copy
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 3 **Cinq concentrés concentriques (Five Concentric Concentrated)**, Paris, April 2007
plastic, rubber
7⅞ x 7⅞ x 7⅞ inches
Edition one of two
Private collection, Marseille
- 4 **Os non os (Bones No Bones)**, Paris, January 2009
bone, epoxy paste
5⅞ x 6⅞ x 5½ inches
Private collection, Lichtenstein
- 5 **Bitte à fruits (Fruit Bollard)**, Paris, September 1999
cement, sand, stones
28⅞ x 11⅞ x 11⅞ inches
Collection Aaron and Barbara Levine, Washington, D.C.
- 6 **Enfant (Child)**, Paris, June 2006
concrete, rope, rubber
9⅞ x 9⅞ x 9⅞ inches
Collection Guillaume Houzé, Paris
- 7 **Cristal Sex**, Paris, April 2006
Cibachrome photographs, paper fasteners
19⅞ x 17⅞ x 15¾ inches
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London
- 8 **Mort et vif (Dead and Alive)**, Paris, May 2009
epoxy resin, iron, Lycra, pigment
19⅞ x 27⅞ x 23⅞ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 9 **Model for Diving**, Paris, August 2007
oil on cardboard
16⅞ x 24⅞ x 27⅞ inches
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London

- 10 **Drapé nuit (A Drape of Night)**, Paris, March 2009
epoxy resin, pigment, rubber
7 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 11 **Cartilage**, Paris, October 2009
epoxy resin, rubber
13 x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 12 **Arthur**, Paris, August 2010
concrete, bone
8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 13 **Mi-tronche (Nonosse) (Half-mug [Bobone])**, Paris, September 2010
concrete, bone
7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{15}{16}$ inches
Private collection, France; Courtesy Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 14 **Boîte à jus (Juice Box)**, Paris, Summer 2005
excrement, plaster, urine, wax, wood
12 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{15}{16}$ inches
Collection Tim Walsh and Mike Healy
- 15 **Modèle pour quelque chose généralisée (Model for Whatever Generalized)**, Paris, July 2011
polyurethane, steel
30 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 16 **Unispace**, Paris, April 2010
epoxy resin, Lycra, pigment, steel
19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 35 $\frac{7}{16}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 17 **Chute d'escalier (Staircase Fall)**, Paris, October 24, 2008
graphite, rabbit-skin glue, wood
17 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 43 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and carlier I gebauer, Berlin
- 18 **Météo (Weather)**, Paris, May 2009
plastic hoses
14 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 25 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 19 **Mondex**, Paris, March 2006
plastic, wood
23 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London
- 20 **Chrome**, Paris, June 1999
steel
16 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 21 **Knot 3.1 Varia 04**, Paris, June 2010
elastomer, lost-wax bronze, steel, wood
59 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 22 **Boule fixe (sphère de Lisbonne) (Fixed Ball [Lisbon Sphere])**, Paris, May 1, 2007
cobblestones, epoxy resin, polyurethane foam
34 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 34 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 34 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 23 **Piège à calibres (Caliber Trap)**, Les Arques, Lot, August 2008
aluminum, steel
armed: 55 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 53 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
closed: 28 x 53 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Fabricated in collaboration with Dominique Colombo
Collection Centre national des arts plastiques, Department du Fonds national d'art contemporain Tour Atlantique, Paris
- 24 **Baignoire (Bathtub)**, Paris, December 1995
graphite, plaster, wax
16 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 61 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 24 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Private collection; Courtesy BFAS Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva
- 25 **La tête noire (The Black Head)**, Paris, January 2007
concrete, graphite
15 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 12 x 13 inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 26 **n Trous outremer rose (n Ultramarine Pink Holes)**, Paris, May 2009
epoxy resin, Lycra, pigment
23 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 41 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 27 $\frac{7}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 27 **Knot 5.1 Varia 02**, Paris, March 2011
elastomer, lost-wax bronze, steel, wood
59 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 28 **Tendu (Tensed)**, Paris, February 2011
bone, PVC, steel cable, wood
26 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 64 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 29 **Monument pour Sainte Anne (Monument for Saint Anne)**, from the series **Bordel d'organes (Organ Brothel)**, Paris, September 2008
cement, liquid makeup, paint, paper, plaster, wood
15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

- 30 **Fig. Bifur. (Bifurcated Figure)**, Paris, June 2009
cotton, epoxy resin, pigment
19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches inches
Private collection, United Kingdom
- 31 **Bleu Gauloises bleues (Gauloises Blue's Blue)**, Fleury Les Aubrais and Lille, June 2000
paper, tobacco
210 units: 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches inches each
overall dimensions: 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 x 13 inches
Produced by Altadis, S.A.
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 32 **n Trous bleu (n Blue Holes)**, Paris, February 2008
epoxy resin, paper, paint, pigment, rope
19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 55 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
- 33 **Tricolore (Tricolor)**, Paris, May 2009
epoxy resin, paint, rubber, wood
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny
- 34 **Model for Sharing**, Paris, December 2007
oil, rabbit-skin glue, silver, wood
19 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 43 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 35 **Etude pour Body—maquette III (Study for Body—Model III)**, Paris, October 2009
foam, oil paint
7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 36 **Kyste dentu (Cyst with Teeth)**, from the series **Bordel d'organes (Organ Brothel)**, Les Arques, Lot, June 2008
oak, teeth
4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris
- 37 **Vivants cerveaux d'ordures (Living Brains of Garbage)**, from the series **Bordel d'organes (Organ Brothel)**, Les Arques, Lot, June 2008
concrete
2 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

La Vigie

La Vigie (The Lookout Man), Paris, 2004–11
black-and-white and Cibachrome photographs; 299 prints
298 prints: 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; 1 print: 25 x 32 inches
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; and Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels

Body

Body, Guyancourt, October 2011
aluminum, basalt fiber, pigment, resin
8 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 28 x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet
Fabricated by D3 Groupe
Produced by Renault Automobiles
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

The Dan Flavin Art Institute

Monochromes/Samples, New York, November 2011
Bic ink, Claybord
4 units: 24 x 36 inches each
Courtesy the artist and Galería Desiré Saint Phalle, Mexico City

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