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PRESS RELEASE

PREHISTORY

8 MAY – 16 SEPTEMBER 2019
GALERIE 1, LEVEL 6

The Centre Pompidou is staging an original exhibition presenting the ties uniting prehistory with modern and contemporary art. The exhibition demonstrates how, in the great period of crisis called « modernity », first artists, then society as a whole, felt drawn to their « origins » and how a fantasy vision was built up of « what preceded History ». It reveals that some of the most important artists of the 20th and 21st century were haunted by the question of « prehistory »: Picasso, Miró but also Cézanne, Klee, Giacometti, Ernst, Beuys, Klein, Dubuffet, Louise Bourgeois, Marguerite Duras, Robert Smithson, and, among our contemporaries, Giuseppe Penone, Miquel Barceló, Marguerite Humeau, Pierre Huyghe, Dove Allouche, and others. At the same time, the exhibition presents many documents showing that, for us, « prehistory » functions as a time machine. The forces at play here draw their fecundity from their very contradictions: the need to deconstruct and the need to build new foundations; the emergence from history and the immersion in history; the desire for revolution and fear of the apocalypse.

Prehistory is a modern idea: the word itself was not established until the 1860s.

« Prehistoric » reality was built up progressively in the course of the 19th century as an inseparable body of facts, ideas and fantasies. It breaks down into three main stages:

- the growing awareness of the long duration of life on earth, based on the analysis of fossils (at the turn of the 18th and 19th century)
- the notion of a « prehistory » of human cultures, intimately connected to the idea of artistic activity (the 1860s)
- the specific recognition of parietal art (at the turn of the 19th and 20th century).



This vast body of images, hypotheses and speculations had an immense impact on the 20th century, both on the collective imagination and on individual creation. The idea of «prehistory» touched a deep vein in our imaginations. The evidence for an earth without mankind and a slow process of hominization also led people to imagine the possible extinction of the human species. The passage from hunter-gatherer (Palaeolithic) societies to agrarian (Neolithic) societies gave rise to reflections on mankind's growing power over his environment, all the way up to the industrial era. «Prehistoric» art in particular, or at least what is considered to be «prehistoric» art, was established not only as an object of fascination, but also as a concrete model for artistic experimentation of all sorts.

The tour provides a chronological progression with a preamble referring back to the turn of the 19th and 20th century (Redon, Cézanne), a central core ranging from the 1930s (e.g. Picasso, Miró, Giacometti, Ernst) through to the late 1960s (e.g. Louise Bourgeois, Beuys, Smithson) and a final contemporary part. In the course of this progression, the eyes and minds of visitors are directed toward different subjects: the expanse of time, earth without mankind, human beings and animals, gestures and tools, caves, the Neolithic period and the historic present. All punctuated by the presentation of iconic prehistoric works from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods : fossils, major Palaeolithic sculptures (the Venus of Lespugue and the mammoth of La Madeleine), engraved stones, knapped and polished flints, menhirs and Neolithic idols. Lastly, a cultural narrative unfolds at the same time, evoking the invention of prehistory and its popular dissemination (results of excavations, «prehistoric» novels such as *The Quest for Fire*, cult films based on mythological origins such as *The Lost World*, *2001 A Space Odyssey* and *Jurassic Park*.

The project has received the special support of the Musée de l'Homme (the National Museum of Natural History), the Museum of National Antiquities and the National Museum of Prehistory.

THE EXHIBITION

CURATORS

Cécile Debray, Director, Musée de l'Orangerie

Rémi Labrusse, Professor of Art History, Université Paris Nanterre

Maria Stavrinaki, Lecturer on Art History, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

Production manager : **Sara Renaud**

PRATICAL INFORMATION

ADMISSION AND PRICES

Centre Pompidou, 75191 Paris cedex 04

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Access: metro Hôtel de Ville and Rambuteau, RER Châtelet-Les-Halles.

Opening times: every day from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., except Tuesdays and May 1st.

Admission: €14, reduced price €11

Free for those under 18. Young people under 26*, teachers and students at schools of art, drama, dance and music and members of the Maison des artistes may visit the Museum for free and buy tickets for exhibitions at the concessionary rate.

Free admission for Centre Pompidou members.

Home printable tickets: centrepompidou.fr

* Nationals of Member States of the EU or the European Economic Area aged 18–25.

Valid the same day for the Musée National d'Art Moderne and all exhibitions.

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AT THE SAME TIME AND UPCOMING AT THE CENTRE POMPIDOU

IN PARIS

DORA MAAR

5 JUNE – 29 JULY 2019

GALERIE 2, LEVEL 6

BERNARD FRIZE

29 JUNE – 26 AUGUST 2019

GALERIE 3, LEVEL 1

CAO FEI

5 JUNE – 26 AUGUST 2019

GALERIE 4, LEVEL 1

ERNEST MANCOBA

26 JUNE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

GALERIE 0, LEVEL 4

SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

26 JUNE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

GALERIE D'ART GRAPHIQUE,
LEVEL 4

TAKESADA MATSUTANI

26 JUNE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

GALERIE DU MUSÉE, LEVEL 4

GASTON PARIS

19 JUNE – 7 OCTOBER 2019

GALERIE DE PHOTOGRAPHIES,
LEVEL-1

**A ROMANIAN CYCLE AT THE
CENTRE
POMPIDOU**

ISIDORE ISOU

UNTIL 20 MAY 2019

MUSEUM, LEVEL 4

CIPRIAN MURESAN

SERBAN SAVU

THE ENDLESS WORKSHOP

UNTIL 1 JULY 2019

BRANCUSI WORKSHOP

IN METZ

THE ADVENTURE OF COLOUR

MAJOR ARTWORKS

FROM THE COLLECTION

UNTIL 22 JULY 2019

GRANDE NEF

LEE UFAN

HABITER LE TEMPS

INHABITING TIME

27 FEBRUARY – 30 SEPTEMBER

2019

GALERIE 1

REBECCA HORN

THEATER OF METAMORPHOSES

6 JUNE – 11 NOVEMBER 2019

GALERIE 2

OPERA WORLD

22 JUNE 2019 – 27 JANUARY 2020

GALERIE 3

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UNTIL 9 JUNE 2019

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IN BRUXELLES

KANAL-CENTRE POMPIDOU

A YEAR OF PREFIGURATION

UNTIL 10 JUNE 2019

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