



niki

MONOGRAPH BIO – NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

1930

Catherine Marie-Agnès Fal de Saint Phalle is born at Neuilly-sur-Seine on October 29. She is the second of five children born to Jeanne Jacqueline née Harper and André Marie Fal de Saint Phalle. Her father is one of seven brothers with a share in the family's banking house. When the stock exchange collapses in 1930, he loses both the business and his fortune. Marie-Agnès is sent to her paternal grandparents in France, where she spends the next three years in Nièvre.

1933

Marie-Agnès rejoins her parents in Greenwich, Connecticut. She often spends her summer holidays at the Château of Filerval, owned by her maternal grandfather and built by Le Nôtre.

1937

The family moves into an apartment on East 88th Street in New York. Marie-Agnès, now known as Niki, attends the Convent School of the Sacred Heart on East 91st Street.

1941

Niki de Saint Phalle is expelled from the Convent School. She moves to Princeton, New Jersey, to live with her grandparents, who left France because of the Second World War. She attends the local public school.

1942

Niki de Saint Phalle returns to her parents' home and attends Brearley School, New York. She reads Edgar Allan Poe, Shakespeare and Greek tragedy. She takes part in school performances and writes her first plays and poems, among which is *La Peste*.

1944

Niki de Saint Phalle paints the fig leaves on the school statues bright red. Her headmistress suggests Niki should either have psychiatric treatment or leave school. Her parents send her to a Convent School at Suffren, New York State.

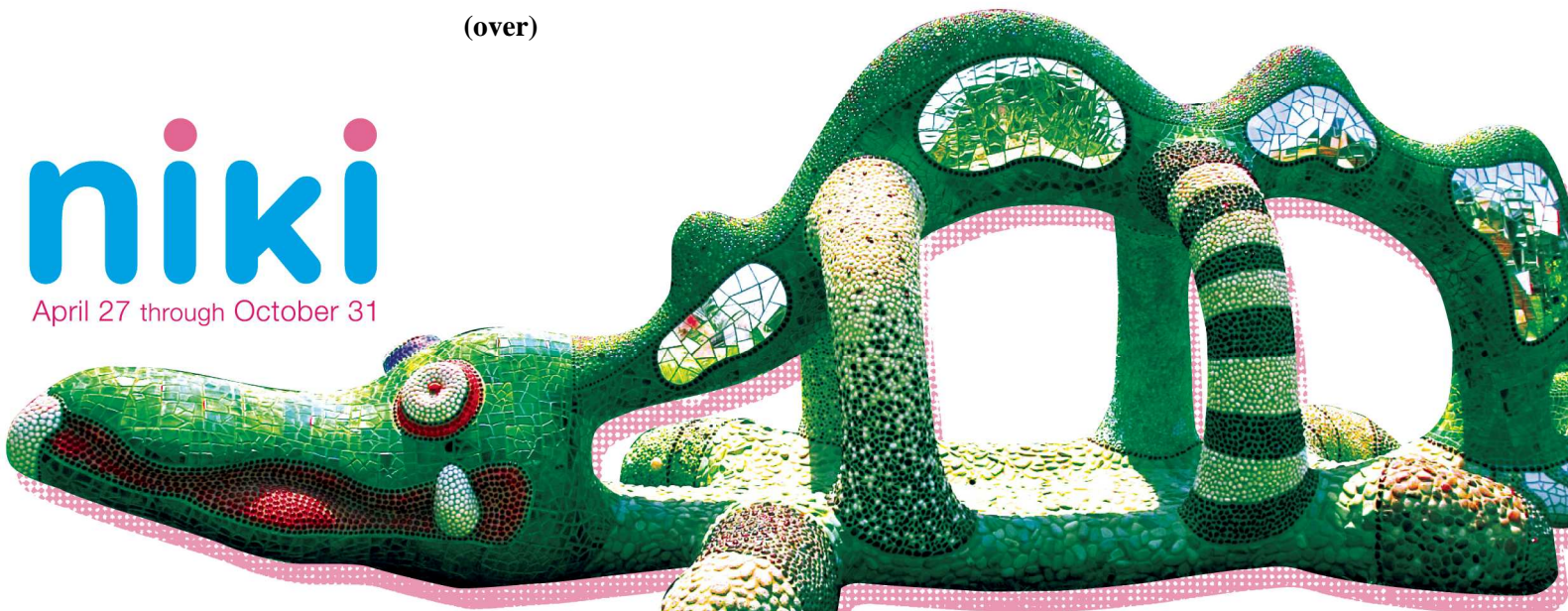
1947

Niki de Saint Phalle graduates from Oldfield School in Maryland.

(over)

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April 27 through October 31



1948-1949

She works as a model. Photographs of her appear in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and on the cover of *Life* Magazine. Niki de Saint Phalle, 18, elopes with Harry Mathews, 19, who had enrolled in the U.S. Marine Corps. On June 6, 1949, they marry in a registry office.

1950

In February, fulfilling their parents' wish, Niki de Saint Phalle and Harry Mathews get married in the French Church, New York, and settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He studies music at Harvard University and Niki begins to produce her first oils and gouaches.

1951

In April their daughter, Laura, is born in Boston.

1952

Niki, Harry and Laura Mathews leave Boston and move into an apartment in the Rue Jean Dolent in Paris. Harry Mathews carries on with his music studies in the hope of becoming a conductor. Niki studies drama. They both take charge of their daughter's education. The family spends the summer months in the South of France, Spain and Italy, where they visit museums and cathedrals. Niki is impressed by the idea that a cathedral is the result of a "collective ideal." This thought will have an important impact later on her work.

1953

Niki de Saint Phalle suffers a severe nervous breakdown and is treated as an in-patient in Nice. Since painting helps her to overcome this crisis in her life, she decides to give up acting and become an artist. At the same time, Harry Mathews abandons his music studies and writes his first novel.

1954

In March, Niki and Harry Mathews buy their first car in Nice. They drive back to Paris, where they share a house with Anthony Bonner, an American jazz musician and composer. Niki Mathews is introduced to the American painter Hugh Weiss, who remains her mentor for five years and who encourages her to retain her autodidactic style. In September, Niki, Harry and Laura Mathews move to Deyá on the island of Mallorca.

1955

Their son, Philip, is born on May 1. Niki visits Madrid and Barcelona, where she discovers the work of Gaudí. These visits, and particularly the Park Güell, change her life, and give her the idea of creating a garden of sculpture herself one day.

1956-1958

The Mathews family spends most of its time in the French Alps at Lans-en-Vercors. Niki produces a series of oil paintings, which she exhibits for the first time in St. Gallen in April 1956.

In August the Mathews family returns to Paris and moves into a small apartment in the Rue Alfred Durand-Claye. Harry and Niki often visit the Louvre and other museums. Niki discovers the works of Paul Klee, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and the Douanier Rousseau. With Harry Mathews she meets many contemporary writers, including John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch.

In 1956, Niki also meets Jean Tinguely and his wife, Eva Aeppli. Niki visits Joseph Ferdinand Cheval's Palais Idéal at Hauterives. For her first sculpture, Niki asks Jean Tinguely to prepare an iron structure, which she covers with plaster.

1959

Niki de Saint Phalle visits the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and sees works by the American artists Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Robert Rauschenberg.

1960

Niki and Harry Mathews separate; Harry moves to the Rue de Varennes with their children, while Niki remains in the Rue Alfred Durand-Claye. She continues her artistic experiments; producing assemblages in plaster and target pictures. At the end of the year, she and Jean Tinguely move into the Impasse Ronsin, where they share the same studio. Jean Tinguely introduces her to Pontus Hulten, the director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm who will organize many important exhibitions at that time and buy some of her works for the Moderna Museet.

1961

During February a group exhibition is held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris under the title *Comparaison: Peinture - Sculpture*. Niki de Saint Phalle exhibits a target montage titled *Portrait of My Lover*.

On February 12 she organizes the first of more than twelve "shootings" which are held in 1961, 1962 and 1963. These events involve assemblages incorporating containers of paint which, concealed beneath the plaster, spatter their contents over the image when shot with a pistol. The resultant pictures are known as "shooting paintings." Among spectators at the first event are members of the Nouveaux Réalistes. Enthused, Pierre Restany invites Niki to join the group, which already includes Arman, César, Christo, Gérard Deschamps, François Dufrêne, Raymond Hains, Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, Mimmo Rotella, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely and Jacques Villeglé.

In March, Niki de Saint Phalle takes part in an exhibition, *Bewogen Beweging*, organized by Pontus Hulten at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. This exhibition is later shown in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek, Denmark.

On June 20, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely take part in one of John Cage's concerts, *Variations II*, in the American Embassy in Paris. While David Tudor plays music by John Cage on the piano, other works of art are created on stage.

Pierre Restany organizes at the Galerie J, run by his wife Jeannine Goldschmidt, Niki's first one-woman exhibition under the title *Tir à volonté*, from June 30 to July 12. Leo Castelli, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and all the Nouveaux Réalistes attend the launch. Rauschenberg buys a "shooting painting."

Pierre Restany organizes a Festival of Nouveaux Réalistes at the Galerie Muratore in Nice. For the official opening on the evening of July 13, Niki de Saint Phalle arranges a "shooting" at the Abbaye Roseland at which all the Nouveaux Réalistes take part.

Marcel Duchamp introduces Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely to Salvador Dalí. During a trip to Spain in August, both artists are invited to take part in celebrations in honor of Dalí. They create a life-size bull made of plaster and paper, which explodes in the Arena at Figueras during a firework display.

In October Niki de Saint Phalle takes part in *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition subsequently travels to the Dallas Museum for Contemporary Art and the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Between June and September more than 50 international magazines and journals carry reports on Niki de Saint Phalle's work.

In the fall, Larry Rivers and his wife, Clarice, settle in one of the studios in the Impasse Ronsin; they soon strike up a friendship with Niki.

1962

In February, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely travel to California and visit Simon Rodilla's Watts Tower near Los Angeles. With the help of Niki de Saint Phalle he organizes a "happening," *Study for an End of the World*

Number 2, in the Nevada Desert. Niki de Saint Phalle stages her first two “shootings” in the United States: the first is held on March 4 at Virginia Dwan’s beach house at Malibu, the second assisted by Ed Kienholz In the hills overlooking Malibu.

Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely travel to Mexico.

On May 4, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely and many other artists take part in Kenneth Koch’s play, *The Construction of Boston*, directed by Merce Cunningham. On stage at the Maidman Playhouse, New York is her “shooting sculpture,” *Vénus de Milo*.

Following her return to Europe she exhibits ten works at a one-woman exhibition at Paris’s Galerie Rive Droite. Among the visitors is Alexander Iolas, who invites Niki de Saint Phalle to exhibit in New York the following October. He supports her financially for many years and organizes numerous exhibitions. It is Iolas who introduces her to the Surrealist painters Victor Brauner, Max Ernst and René Magritte.

Yves Klein dies suddenly on June 6.

From August 30 to September 30, Niki takes part in *Dylaby* (Dynamic Labyrinth), a large-scale installation at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, in which Robert Rauschenberg, Martial Raysse, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely and Per Olof Ultvedt are also involved.

From October 15 to November 3, Niki de Saint Phalle opens her first one-woman exhibition in New York at the Alexander Iolas Gallery. In addition to ten other works, she exhibits her *Homage to Le Facteur Cheval*, a shooting gallery in which members of the public are invited to fire at a construction.

1963

In May, Virginia Dwan organizes a shooting event in Los Angeles at which Niki de Saint Phalle shoots at her monumental sculpture, *King Kong*. The work is bought by the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Her taste for horror films is a source of inspiration for her.

Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely buy a former inn, the Auberge du Cheval Blanc, at Soisy-sur-Ecole near Essonne. Niki de Saint Phalle confronts the various roles of women in society, producing a series of sculptures of women in childbirth, devouring mothers, witches and whores.

1964

Niki de Saint Phalle spends the summer at Lutry, near Lausanne working on large paper mâché and wool heads, brides and her *St. George and the Dragon*.

In September she has her first solo exhibition at London’s Hanover Gallery.

In October she visits New York, where she lives and works at the Chelsea Hotel, making a series of paper collages of Nanas, hearts and dragons.

1965

Inspired by Clarice Rivers’ pregnancy, Niki de Saint Phalle creates in April, her first Nanas, made of paper maché and wool.

In August, Monique Jacot writes a 12-page article on Niki in the Swiss art review *DU*.

In September, Niki shows her Nanas during her solo exhibition at the Galerie Alexandre Iolas, in Paris. During the show the Artists Club of New York organizes a sort of tombola (a type of raffle), where works by leading artists are

left in lockers at Penn Station. Keys cost \$10 each. On that occasion, Iolas publishes Niki's first artist's book, which includes a handwritten text illustrated with her drawings of Nanas.

At Iolas' suggestion, she begins to work on many promotional projects (invitations, posters, books, writings). Niki de Saint Phalle makes her first series of silkscreen prints.

1966

In collaboration with Martial Raysse and Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle designs the scenery and costumes for Roland Petit's ballet, *Eloge de la Folie*, performed in March at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

In June, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely and Per Olof Ultvedt are invited by Pontus Hulten to install a sculpture in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. They decide to create a monumental reclining Nana, 28 meters long, 9 meters wide and 6 meters high. It is called *Hon* (the Swedish pronoun, "she").

While working in Stockholm, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely meet the young Swiss artist, Rico Weber. He works on *Hon* with them and remains their assistant and colleague for many years.

In October, Niki de Saint Phalle designs the sets and costumes for Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* in a production by Rainer von Diez at the Staatstheater in Kassel, Germany.

1967

Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely work on *Le Paradis Fantastique*, a commission from the French government for the French Pavilion at Expo'67 in Montreal. The commission consists of nine painted sculptures by Niki de Saint Phalle and six black kinetic machines by Jean Tinguely. *Le Paradis Fantastique* is subsequently shown at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo and, for a year, in Central Park, New York. It is now on permanent exhibition in Stockholm, close to the Moderna Museet.

In August, Niki de Saint Phalle's first museum show is held at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, under the title *Nana Power*. For this exhibition she creates her first Nana Dream House and Nana Fountain and plans her first Nana Town. The new exhibits are made of polyester, a material with which she has only recently started to work.

1968

In June, Niki de Saint Phalle's first play, *ICH* (All About Me), is performed at the Staatstheater in Kassel. Her co-author is the director, Rainer von Diez. She designs the sets, costumes and the bill.

In October, Niki de Saint Phalle exhibits her 18-part wall relief, *Last Night I Had a Dream*, at the Galerie Alexandre Iolas in Paris.

Niki de Saint Phalle designs inflatable Nanas, which are marketed in New York.

Towards the end of the year Niki de Saint Phalle suffers serious breathing difficulties, caused by inhaling polyester fumes and dust. She visits Morocco.

1969

Following her return from a visit to India, Niki de Saint Phalle begins work on her first architectural project, three houses in the South of France for Rainer von Diez, completed in 1971.

The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York acquires the sculpture *Black Venus*, and exhibits it at its April exhibition, Contemporary American Sculpture, Selection 2.

Niki de Saint Phalle begins work on *La tête (Le Cyclop)*, a collaborative project in Milly-la-Forêt initiated by Jean Tinguely and involving a large number of artists.

1970

On November 29, a festival is organized by Pierre Restany and Guido Le Noci in Milan to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Nouveaux Réalistes. At the opening ceremony, Niki de Saint Phalle shoots at an altar assemblage.

A series of 17 serigraphs is published in Paris under the title Nana Power.

Niki de Saint Phalle visits Egypt for the first time with Jean Tinguely.

1971

On July 13, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely are married in Soisy. They visit Morocco. Her granddaughter Bloum is born on the island of Bali, the daughter of Laura and Laurent Condominas.

Niki de Saint Phalle designs her first jewelry.

At the end of the year she begins work on *Golem*, an architectural project for children in Jerusalem's Rabinovitch Park, completed in 1972.

1972

From now on Niki de Saint Phalle works with Robert Haligon, Fabricant de Plastiques d'Art and later with his son Gérard, to produce her large-scale sculptures and editions.

In July she rents the Château-de-Mons near Grasse in the South of France, where she begins shooting the first version of *Daddy*, written and produced in association with Peter Whitehead, and shown at London's Hammer Cinema the following November. Niki de Saint Phalle visits Greece.

1973

In January, Niki de Saint Phalle works on a revised version of *Daddy* in Soisy and New York, again with Mia Martin, Clarice Rivers and Rainer von Diez. The world première of the revised version is shown in April as part of the 11th New York Film Festival at the Lincoln Center. Niki de Saint Phalle designs the cover of the program.

Niki de Saint Phalle designs a swimming pool for Georges Plouvier in Saint-Tropez.

In the Belgian town of Knokke-le-Zoute she builds the *Dragon*, a fully equipped playhouse for the children of Fabienne and Roger Nellens.

1974

Niki de Saint Phalle installs three gigantic Nanas in Hanover, which the city names Caroline, Charlotte and Sophie, in honor of of Hanover's most recognized queens.

Galerie Alexandre Iolas in Paris shows an exhibition of her architectural projects.

She suffers an abscess on her lung, caused by years of working with polyester. After a period in hospital she visits Arizona and St. Moritz to convalesce. It is here that she meets again Marella Agnelli, a friend whom she met in the 1950s in New York. Niki tells her of her dream of making a sculpture garden and Marella's brothers, Carlo and Nicolas Carracciolo, offer her land in Tuscany on which to realize her dream.

1975

Niki de Saint Phalle writes the screenplay for the film, *Un rêve plus long que la nuit*. Many of her artist friends are involved in shooting the film. She designs several pieces of furniture for the sets.

1976

Niki de Saint Phalle spends the entire year in Swiss mountains, planning her sculpture park.

1977

Together with Constantin Mulgrave, Niki de Saint Phalle designs the sets for the film, *The Traveling Companion*, which is based on a fairy story by Hans Christian Andersen, yet the film is never finalized. She visits Mexico and New Mexico. Ricardo Menon becomes her assistant, continuing to work with her for the next 10 years.

1978

Niki de Saint Phalle begins laying out her *Giardino dei Tarocchi* on the estate of Carlo and Nicola Carracciolo at Garavicchio in Tuscany. Inspired by the Tarot cards, Niki begins a series of 22 monumental sculptures.

1979

Niki de Saint Phalle spends most of her time in Tuscany laying the foundations for her Tarot Garden. In March she holds her first exhibition in Japan at Tokyo's Watari Gallery. Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer of New York holds an exhibition of the models and photographs for her architectural projects. The exhibition, *Monumental Projects*, tours the U.S.A.

She invents new sculptures, which she calls Skinnies.

1980

In April, Niki de Saint Phalle begins work on the first sculptures for her Tarot Garden, *The Magician* and *The High Priestess*. In Ulm, her sculpture *Le Poète et sa Muse* is unveiled on the university campus. The installation coincides with an exhibition of her graphic work, which lasts from May until July.

From July to September the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris devotes an important retrospective exhibition to her that subsequently travels to Austria, Germany and Sweden.

Yoko Masuda organizes the first exhibition at Space Niki in Tokyo.

Niki makes her first polyester snake chairs, vases and lamps.

1981

Niki de Saint Phalle rents a small house close to the Tarot Garden for which she employs local workers. Jean Tinguely and his All-Star Swiss Team of Sepp Imhof and Rico Weber take on the task of welding the tarot sculptures.

In spring, she paints the exterior of a new twin-engine airplane, the Piper Aérostar 602 P, for the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation in Amsterdam. In June, the plane arrives second in the first Paris-New York-Paris transatlantic air race.

1982

An American company, Jacqueline Cochran, New York, invites Niki de Saint Phalle to create a new perfume. She uses the proceeds to finance her Tarot Garden.

Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle collaborate on a sculpture-fountain of 15 elements for the Place Igor Stravinsky, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. They are assisted by Pierre Marie Lejeune, who continues to assist Niki and Jean for many years.

The Galleries of Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer in New York and Gimpel Fils, London, show Niki's *Skinnies*.

Work on the Tarot Garden progresses. Substituting Jean Tinguely, the Dutch artist Doc van Winsen works on the steel construction of the sculptures. By the end of the year they begin applying cement.

Niki suffers her first attack of rheumatoid arthritis.

1983

The Stuart Foundation commissions a sculpture, *Sun God*, for the campus of the University of California at San Diego.

Niki de Saint Phalle moves into *The Empress* in the Tarot Garden and will use that building, designed in the shape of a sphinx, as a studio and home for the next seven years.

She decides to use ceramics in addition to mirrors and glass for the sculptures. Ricardo Menon discovers Venera Finocchiaro, a ceramics teacher in Rome, who produces all their ceramics from now on.

1984

Niki de Saint Phalle works full-time on her Tarot Garden.

1985

The buildings *The Magician*, *The Tower*, *The Empress* and *The High Priestess* are completed. Jean Tinguely constructs a machine for *The Tower of Babel*.

1986

Niki de Saint Phalle spends most of the year at Garavicchio, where more sculptures are installed in her Tarot Garden.

Together with Professor Silvio Barandun she writes and illustrates a book, *AIDS: You Can't Catch It Holding Hands*, published in English and later translated into five different languages. Ricardo Menon returns to Paris to attend drama school. He introduces Niki de Saint Phalle to Marcelo Zitelli, who becomes her assistant.

1987

In March, the Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung in Munich holds a major exhibition of Niki de Saint Phalle's work, *Niki de Saint Phalle - Bilder - Figuren - Phantastische Gärten*.

Her first retrospective in America is held at the Nassau County Museum of Fine Art in Roslyn, Long Island, under the title *Fantastic Visions: Works by Niki de Saint Phalle*.

1988

Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely receive a commission from French President Mitterrand to design a fountain for Château-Chinon, where he had been mayor for many years. Mitterrand unveils the fountain, in front of the town hall, on March 10.

Helen Schneider commissions another fountain for the Schneider Children's Hospital in Long Island. Niki de Saint Phalle designs a snake tree 5.50 meters in height.

She also designs a gigantic kite, *L'Oiseau amoureux*, for a worldwide traveling exhibition devoted to kites and organized by the Goethe Institute, Japan.

1989

Niki de Saint Phalle has a twin exhibition at the JGM Galerie and the Galerie de France under the title *Oeuvres des années 80*, where she shows works created in collaboration with Jean Tinguely.

She works in bronze for the first time and designs a series of Egyptian gods.

Ricardo Menon dies of AIDS.

Together with her son Philip Mathews, she produces a cartoon film that is based on her book, *AIDS: You Can't Catch It Holding Hands*.

1990

In June, Niki de Saint Phalle exhibits works from the 1960s at both the Galerie de France and the JGM Galerie in Paris. The exhibitions are titled *Tirs... et autres révoltes 1961-1964*.

In November she presents her film about AIDS at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. To coincide with the presentation, the museum mounts an exhibition of drawings for the film and for the revised version of the book *Sida: tu ne l'attraperas pas* is published by the Agence Française de Lutte contre le SIDA and distributed to schoolchildren throughout France.

1991

Niki makes a maquette for *Le Temple Idéal*, a place for worship for all religions. This architecture was originally conceived in the early 1970s as a hopeful alternative to the religious intolerance she observed while working in Jerusalem. She receives a commission from the city of Nîmes, France, to build this architectural sculpture. Because of politics, the project is never realized.

In June, an exhibition is held at the Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, under the title *Gods*.

Jean Tinguely dies in Bern, Switzerland in August 1991. In his honor, she makes her first kinetic sculptures, the *Meta-Tinguelys*.

1992-1993

A major retrospective organized by the Kunst und Ausstellungshalle in Bonn, Germany, travels – slightly modified for every new exhibition – to the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; and the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Fribourg, Switzerland.

She conceives a series of kinetic reliefs, or paintings in movement, the *Tableaux Eclatés*. A large-scale outdoor fountain, *Lebensretter*, is installed in the City of Duisburg, Germany.

Niki makes a sculpture, *The Footballers*, for the Musée Olympique in Lausanne.

1994

Niki de Saint Phalle moves to San Diego, California, where she lives for next eight years. She contracts with Lech Juretko to organize a studio for the cutting of mirrors, glass and stones, which she uses increasingly in her sculptures instead of paint.

Creates a series of silkscreens, *California Diary*, published by Ebi Kornfeld, as well as 26 lithographs created with two former collaborators of Sam Francis – George Page and Jacob Samuel. In October, the Niki Museum opens in

Nasu, Japan, devoted to the life and work of Niki de Saint Phalle.

She begins collaboration with architect Mario Botta on a major sculpture-architectural project, *Noah's Ark*, for Jerusalem.

She designs a postage stamp, *Stop AIDS/Stop SIDA*, for Switzerland.

Niki receives Le Prix Caran d'Ache.

1995

Peter Schamoni completes a documentary film about Niki, *Who is the Monster? You or Me?* The French cultural organization AFAA organizes a traveling exhibition to museums in Central and South America. Niki embarks on a collaboration with Swiss architect Mario Botta for a major sculpture-architectural project, *Noah's Ark*, commissioned by the Jerusalem Foundation for The Tisch Family Zoological Gardens in Jerusalem, Israel.

The French cultural agency Asociacion Francesca de Accion Artistica, organizes a traveling exhibition to major museums in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and Chile.

1996

She begins construction of the Gila Monster, a children's playhouse in the form of a dragon 12 feet high and 30 feet long, covered in a mosaic of mirrors, stones, ceramics and glass at a private residence in San Diego.

The Jean Tinguely Museum, designed by Mario Botta, opens in Basel. Niki donates 55 major sculptures and over 100 graphic works by Jean, making the bulk of the collection.

1997

For the main railway station in Zürich, Niki receives a commission from the Swiss Railways (CFF) for *L'Ange Protecteur*, a 33 feet high sculpture, unveiled in November.

Mario Botta constructs a wall and entrance for the Tarot Garden.

Niki de Saint Phalle designs snake chairs in wood with mosaic inlay, made by Del Cover and Dave Carr.

1998

Official opening of the Tarot Garden on May 15, 1998.

Niki finishes the last of 22 animal sculptures for *Noah's Ark* as well as the *Black Heroes* series, an homage to prominent African-Americans including Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong and Josephine Baker.

Her largest American retrospective to date is curated by close friend Martha Longenecker, director of The Mingei International Museum in San Diego.

1999-2000

Niki begins to search for land on which to build a sculpture garden in San Diego County. In October 2000, the City of Escondido accepts her offer to create a garden in the Sankey Arboretum in Kit Carson Park. She starts design work and plans for *Queen Califia's Magical Circle*. She draws much of its imagery from her interpretations of early California history, myth and legend, Native Americans and Meso-American culture, and the study of indigenous plants and wildlife.

She is awarded the 12th Praemium Imperial Prize (Sculpture Category) sponsored by the Japan Art Association and considered equivalent to the Nobel Prize in the art world. Among the other prize winners in 2000 are American composer Stephen Sondheim, painter Ellsworth Kelly, the German composer Hans Werner Henze, and the British architect Richard Rogers.

Niki starts to exhibit with the Tasende Gallery, San Diego.

In November 2000, the Sprengel Museum in Hanover unveils a portion of the more than 300 works donated by the artist and publishes a major catalogue about the gift.

Niki makes a new series of vases.

2001

She accepts a commission to redesign and ornament three rooms in the historic 17th century *Grotto* built in Hanover's Royal Herrenhausen Garden. Originally decorated with shells, crystals and minerals removed in the 18th century, the building was used as a store for many years. Donates major gifts of work to the City of Nice for its Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain and to the Musée d'Art Décoratifs in Paris.

Niki designs and builds a 12-meter-tall sculpture, *Coming Together*, for the Port of San Diego. The sculpture in the shape of half a female and male face united, adorned with mosaic and stones, is inaugurated in October.

She finishes writing the second volume of her autobiography, *Harry & Me. The Family Years*.

2002

Niki de Saint Phalle dies on May 21 at the age of 71 in La Jolla, California.

Granddaughter Bloum Cardenas, assistant/collaborator Marcelo Zitelli and technical advisor Lech Juretko, as well as other members of her international staff, oversee final work on the Escondido and Hanover projects to ensure they meet her specifications. The exhibition, *From Niki Matthews to Niki De Saint Phalle*, opens at The Sprengel Museum.

2003

The Grotto opens in March with mosaic decorations of glass, mirrors, and pebbles as well as a host of painted and sculpted figures.

A summer exhibition of monumental sculptures is held in Palais-Royal Gardens in Paris.

Queen Califia's Magical Circle is dedicated and opens to the public on October 26. This is her first American garden and the last major project realized by the artist.

The Niki Charitable Art Foundation, a non-profit organization, is established.

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