

MUSÉE CANTONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS LAUSANNE Ted Joans. Black Flower



9.10.2026 — 28.2.2027

Save the date
Press release

Musée cantonal
des Beaux-Arts
Plateforme 10

Place de la Gare 16
1003 Lausanne
Switzerland

mcba.ch

10 PLATEFORME
QUARTIER
DES ARTS
LAUSANNE
vaud

SAVE THE DATE

Press conference

Ted Joans.
Black Flower

Thursday
8 October 2026
at 10.30 am

Musée cantonal
des Beaux-Arts
de Lausanne

Registration required:
presse.mcba@plateforme10.ch

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1. Press release

The Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne (MCBA) presents the first monographic exhibition dedicated to the American artist Ted Joans (1928–2003). A singular figure in the artistic and intellectual history of the twentieth century, Joans created a highly distinctive body of work shaped by Surrealism, jazz, Black Power, Pan-Africanism and transatlantic cultural exchanges. The exhibition offers a rediscovery of his rich and multifaceted universe, at the intersection of poetry, music, and the visual arts.

The artist

A major figure of both the Beat Generation and international Surrealism, Ted Joans developed a free-spirited and deeply engaged practice that defied categorization. A poet, artist, and jazz enthusiast, he contributed to the renewal of Surrealist expression through his engagement with African and diasporic cultures. A close friend of Allen Ginsberg, Langston Hughes, and André Breton, he led a nomadic life between New York, Paris, Tangier, and Timbuktu, where travel, encounter, and improvisation became the driving forces of an artistic practice rooted in freedom, imagination, and the circulation of ideas across Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

The exhibition

Spread across two floors, the exhibition unfolds the multiple dimensions of Joans's practice, where biography, poetry, jazz, and the visual arts are closely intertwined. From the outset, collage emerges as a central method in his work: an approach based on assemblage, displacement, and improvisation that runs throughout his entire oeuvre.

The exhibition first traces Joans's formation between bebop culture and the Beat Generation, before turning to the decisive influence of Langston Hughes and André Breton, situating his work at the intersection of African American Modernism and international Surrealism.

It explores how jazz operates as a structuring force in artistic practice, and how Africa emerges as an essential cultural, political, and imaginative horizon. The collaborative dimension of his practice is also foregrounded, shaped by networks of friendship and exchange within international avant-gardes, as evidenced by the *cadavres exquis* *Long Distance* (1976–2005) and *Seven Sons of Lautréamont* (1973–1976). Questions of desire, intimacy, and affective relationships are further addressed.

An archive of manuscripts, photographs, correspondence, and sound recordings provides the documentary framework for the exhibition.

The second part is devoted to the *Teducation Films*, a series of Super 8 films made by Ted Joans from the 1980s onwards. These works expand the exhibition into the moving image, revealing a free, experimental practice deeply rooted in improvisation. An accompanying educational and documentation area complements this body of work, offering additional resources.

Curator: Pierre-Henri Foulon, curator art contemporain, MCBA

The exhibition is supported by:



2. Ted Joans in 12 Dates

1928

Born on 20 July in Cairo, Illinois, Ted Joans later refashioned his birth date as 4 July, aligning his personal mythology with American Independence Day. Growing up in a segregated America would profoundly shape his political and artistic outlook.

1951

After studying art at Indiana University, Joans moves to New York, where he immerses himself in the city's vibrant jazz and bohemian milieus and begins to establish connections with Beat writers and artists.

1955

Following the death of Charlie Parker, Joans popularizes the legendary *Bird Lives!* slogan, which he scrawls on walls and streets in tribute to the jazz icon. It becomes a recurring motif in his work.

1959

With the publication of *Funky Jazz Poems*, Joans emerges as one of the leading voices in jazz poetry, bringing the rhythms, spontaneity, and performative energy of jazz into verse.

1960

Joans meets André Breton in Paris. He joins the Surrealist circle until Breton's death in 1966 and becomes a key figure in international Surrealism, advocating for the movement's connections with African and diasporic cultures.

1962

Settles in Morocco. Begins a nomadic life between Europe and Africa, making the beginning of a lifelong engagement with the continent that would become central to his artistic and political vision.

1969

Participates in the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, a landmark event in the global articulation of Black Power, anti-colonial struggle, and diasporic cultural unity. This moment represents the height of his Black Power-era engagement, linking his poetry and performance to revolutionary internationalist networks.

1973

He initiates *Seven Sons of Lautréamont*, an exquisite corpse bringing together artists and writers from South America. Conceived in the lineage of Lautréamont—the Uruguay-born poet widely regarded as a precursor of Surrealism—the project reflects both a programmatic vision and a commitment to collective creation.

1976

Joans initiates *Long Distance*, an ambitious exquisite corpse involving 132 contributors. Regarded as the longest exquisite corpse ever realized, the project evolved over nearly three decades through contributions from friends and fellow artists around the world.

1983

While in residency in Berlin, he initiates the *Teducation Films*, a series of experimental Super 8 films that extend his practice into moving images and embrace improvisation, travel, and everyday encounters.

2001

Joans receives the American Book Award for Lifetime Achievement.

2003

Dies on 25 April in Vancouver.

3. First-ever monographic exhibition worldwide

As the first solo exhibition devoted to Ted Joans, this project highlights a transnational career that resonates strongly with contemporary debates on cultural exchange, the circulation of ideas and influences, artistic networks, and decentered narratives of modernity.

Developed in close collaboration with the artist's estate in the United States, the exhibition is the result of several years of research, involving extensive work to identify, document, and bring together both original artworks and archival materials. This collaboration has made it possible to assemble an exceptional corpus of documents, offering new insights into Joans's career and the scope of his international networks.

4. Key figures

Works on view:

Approx. 400 objects (including artworks and archival materials)

Lenders:

30 institutions and private collections

Selected collections holding works by Ted Joans:

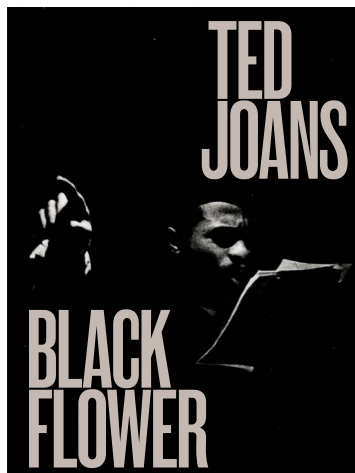
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, New York), Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, de Young Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne

Previously unseen materials:

Archival documents, films, and works on paper never shown to the public before.

5. Publication

Ted Joans. Black Flower, published for the exhibition and edited by Pierre-Henri Foulon, curator of the exhibition, with contributions by Karima Boudou, Manthia Diawara and Terri Geis, Eleonora Del Duca, Valerie Cassel Oliver, Pierre-Henri Foulon, Joanna Pawlik, Gregory Pierrot, and Abigail Susik. Published by DISTANZ, FR/EN, circ. 260 pp.



6. Press images

The images are available upon request → presse.mcba@plateforme10.ch

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Ted Joans, *Bird & Basquiat Lives!*, 1998
Acrylic, ink, graphite, collage, stable and glue
on found surface and frame, 116,7 × 91,4 cm
Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
and Zürcher gallery, New York/Paris
© Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia
and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
Photo: Meridian Fine Art Joseph Wilhelm



Ted Joans, *MAU MAU Mona Lisa*, 1953–1957
 Oil on board, 61 × 44,5 cm
 Private collection
 © Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia
 and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
 Photo: Adam Reich



*Photo of Ted Joans at his Mau Mau Party,
 with a rhinoceros mask, c. 1950.*
 Photographic print, 25,4 × 20,8 cm
 Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
 © All rights reserved
 Photo: MCBA, Lausanne



Ted Joans
 Untitled [Johnny Hodges], 1996
 Wax pencil stick, graphite and ink on paper,
 61 x 91,4 cm
 Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
 © Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia
 and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
 Photo : Meridian Fine Art Joseph Wilhelm



Ted Joans
*The Seven Sons of Lautréamont (and his dutiful
 beautiful Daughter)*, 1973–1976
 Ink on brown paper, 61 x 20 cm
 Courtesy: The Estate of Ted Joans und Zürcher
 Gallery, New York/Paris
 © Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia
 and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
 Photo: Adam Reich



Ted Joans
Some Sum Portrait of a Little Girl in Blue, 1990
 Collage on postcard, 15 x 10,5 cm
 Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne
 Acquisition, 2023
 © Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia
 and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
 Photo: MCBA, Lausanne



*Ted Joans in Astor Place Studio with Bird Lives
 Painting and some Jazz Actions works*, c. 1958
 Photographic print, 20,3 x 25,2 cm
 Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
 © All rights reserved
 Photo: Laura Corsiglia

7. At Plateforme 10

Founded in 1841, the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (MCBA) has been located at the heart of Plateforme 10, Lausanne's arts district, since 2019. The museum houses a collection of nearly 11,000 works spanning from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Throughout the year, it presents a dynamic programme of temporary exhibitions dedicated to historic, modern, and contemporary art, alongside a regularly renewed display of its permanent collection. Together with mudac and Photo Elysée, the MCBA contributes to the international profile of Plateforme 10, one of Switzerland's leading cultural destinations.

MCBA
→ mcba.ch

Ted Joans. Black Flower
09.10.2026–28.02.2027

Lucas Erin. La ronde, Prix culturel Manor Vaud 2026
28.08.2026–14.02.2027 (Espace Projet)

Charles Blanc-Gatti. Les couleurs du son
25.09.2026–17.01.2027 (Espace Focus)

mudac
→ mudac.ch

Isao Takahata. Pionnier du dessin animé
contemporain, de l'après-guerre au Studio Ghibli
24.04–27.09.2026

Et nous alors ? Les animaux en verre de la
collection Pierre Rosenberg
24.04–27.09.2026

Edouard Chapallaz
25.09.2026–31.01.2027

Hocus Pocus. Le design de l'invisible
06.11.2026–11.04.2027

Rencontrologie. Design pour des mondes magiques
06.11.2026–11.04.2027

Photo Elysée
→ elysee.ch

Ella Maillart. Récits photographiques
06.03–01.11.2026

Hannah Darabi. Why Don't You Dance?
26.06–01.11.2026

Alfredo Jaar. Inferno & Paradiso
26.06–01.11.2026

Modèle animal. 200 ans de photographie
04.12.2026–04.04.2027

Plateforme 10
→ plateforme10.ch

Openair Locarno Film Festival
12–18.07.2026

Nuit des musées
26.09.2026

Festival Interstices
05–08.11.2026

8. Information and contact

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All our press releases and press kits are available under:
→ mcba.ch/presse

Press conference

Thursday 8 October 2026 at 10.30 am
Presentation of the exhibition by the curator
Registration required: → presse.mcba@plateforme10.ch

Public opening

Thursday 8 October 2026 at 18.30 pm

Hours:

Tuesday–Sunday 10am–6pm
Thursday 10am–8pm
Monday: closed
25 December and 1st January: closed

Admission and Online Tickets:

→ mcba.ch/billetterie
Up to 25 years old: free
First Saturday of the month: free

Access:

SBB Lausanne train station, 3 minutes on foot
Bus: 85, 3, 20, 21, 60, Gare stop
Bus: 6, Cecil stop
Metro: m2, Gare stop
Car: Montbenon parking, Reduced fee

Address:

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Main Partner Plateforme 10

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Main partners MCBA construction

