

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



9.10.2026–28.2.2027
Press Kit

Musée cantonal
des Beaux-Arts
Plateforme 10

Place de la Gare 16
1003 Lausanne
Switzerland

mcba.ch



Contents

1. Press release
2. The exhibition
3. Publication
4. Biography – Ted Joans in 12 dates
5. Press images
6. Events
7. At Plateforme 10
8. Information and contact

1. Press release

The Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne (MCBA) presents the first solo exhibition devoted to Ted Joans (1928–2003), a singular figure in the Beat Generation and international Surrealism who remains largely overlooked. *Ted Joans. Black Flower* is the result of extensive work to identify, document, and bring together artworks and archival materials, carried out in close collaboration with the artist's estate in the United States. The exhibition invites visitors to rediscover a body of work at the intersection of poetry and the visual arts, shaped by jazz, Surrealism, the Black liberation movement, and Pan-Africanism.

A poet, artist, and tireless traveller, Ted Joans made his life a work in motion. Born in the United States into a society marked by racial segregation, he studied painting and jazz before joining the vibrant artistic scene of Greenwich Village in the 1950s. New York, Paris, Tangier, and Timbuktu became the anchors of a personal geography spanning three continents and connecting North America, Europe, and Africa.

Joans called himself as a 'jazz poet' and a Surrealist but refused to be pigeonholed in any single identity, movement, or discipline. He moved freely between poetry and drawing, collage and film, and performance. Jazz offered him a model based on rhythm, improvisation, and variation; Surrealism, a way to free the imagination and transform reality.

This pursuit of emancipation also informed his commitment to Black Power and Pan-Africanism. At the same time, Joans formed a constellation of kindred spirits and guiding figures all his own. Langston Hughes, André Breton, and Charlie Parker appear alongside the rhinoceros, his alter ego, which runs through his work as an untameable double.

Spanning two floors of the museum, the exhibition explores the many strands of a art practice that weaves together biography, poetry, jazz, and the visual arts. *Ted Joans. Black Flower* features a large number of works and archival items – along with manuscripts, photographs, recorded audio material, and films, some of which are rarely made available to the public.

Rather than follow a strictly chronological thread, the show adopts Joans's own way of thinking. The works have been laid out to respond to one another through echoes, repetitions, and affinities, like the fragments of a single collage or the infinite variations contained in a jazz piece.

The show begins with his formative years, between Bebop culture and the Beat Generation, before turning to the Black American poet Langston Hughes and the French writer André Breton, in Joans's eyes and art his two 'spiritual fathers' who were forever in dialogue. Jazz also runs throughout the whole of his work. More than a musical genre, it became for him a way to live, write, and draw based on improvisation, rhythm, and unexpected encounters with others.

Africa figured in Joans' imagination long before the continent became one of his preferred places to live. From the 1960s onward, he spent time in Tangier, crossed the Sahara, and divided his time for several decades between Europe and Timbuktu. He did not seek an original, unchanging identity in Africa. Instead, he saw Black culture as a circulation of ideas and styles connecting the continent and its diasporas.

Art Made Through Encounters

Part of Joans's work involved his desire to meet others. Poets, artists, musicians, and friends formed a chosen family spanning generations, disciplines, and continents. These connections were not only the context in which he made art. They became its material and even its method.

The Surrealist collaborative medium known as the exquisite corpse lent concrete form to this understanding of how art can be made. With *The Seven Sons of Lautréamont (and His Dutiful Beautiful Daughter)*, 1973–75, Joans imagined an artistic lineage centred on Lautréamont. With *Long Distance*, he extended the principle across his travels: passed from hand to hand over the years, the work brought together 132 people from very different countries, generations, and artistic Backgrounds.

The importance he placed in movement and working with others can be seen as well in his *Teduction Films*. In the early 1980s, Joans began making a series of short films in Super 8, fifty-six of which have been catalogued to date. From Berlin, Paris, and Mali, to Morocco, Mexico, and Italy, his camera became his faithful travel companion on his trips. Joans himself defined *Teduction* as a 'collective international adventure' and his films as 'silent poems'. Friends, fellow artists, or unknown people simply passing by appear in front of his movie camera and occasionally hold it in turn. In many ways, these films extend the logic of collage to the moving image.

Poem-life

Joans called this melding of artmaking and existence his 'poem-life'. He reinvented his own biography just as he cut and reassembled images, freely placing side by side people, places, and periods in his life.

The exhibition's title, *Black Flower*, comes from a poem and later a manifesto published in 1968. Joans saw himself as a "black flower": a figure of affirmation, resistance, and emancipation rooted in the African American experience, yet able to flourish elsewhere, beyond imposed borders. (The poem is available on request.)

The first exhibition devoted solely to *Ted Joans, Black Flower* highlights a transnational trajectory that resonates with current debates on circulations of cultures, art networks, and the decentred narratives of modernity.

Exhibition curator

Pierre-Henri Foulon, Curator of Contemporary Art, MCBA
With the assistance of Eleonora Del Duca,
Research Specialist in Contemporary Art, MCBA

The exhibition is supported by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and the Loterie Romande.

ART FOUNDATION
MENTOR LUCERNE



Teducation Room

The Teducation Room is a resource and activity space for visitors who want to extend their experience and go deeper into certain aspects of the artist's life and work covered in the show. There they will find a glossary, additional information and context for a selection of artworks, as well as a listening station to hear Ted Joans in a number of sound recordings. An open-access area also offers educational activities, focusing in particular on frottage, or rubbing, a technique the artist frequently used in his work.

The Teducation Room is a wonderful opportunity for visitors to revisit the artworks, explore additional resources, and experience Ted Joans's world at their own pace.

The free access activities are supported by Vaudoise Insurance.



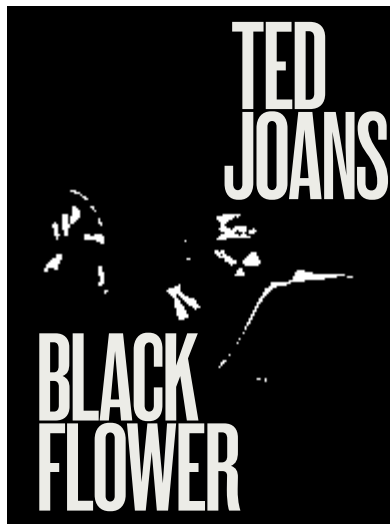
2. The exhibition

Link to the exhibition guide

→ mcba.ch/presse

Available from 30 September 2026

3. Publication



Ted Joans. Black Flower, published to accompany the exhibition, with contributions by Pierre-Henri Foulon (ed.), Karima Boudou, Valerie Cassel Olivier, Eleonora Del Duca, Manthia Diawara and Terri Geis, Joanna Pawlik, Gregory Pierrot and Abigail Susik. Berlin, DISTANZ, FR/EN, 276 pp.

CHF 39.– at the MCBA Book- and Giftshop

→ shop.mcba@plateforme10.ch

Excerpts from the catalogue

“With Joans, kinship is never just a question of blood: it is also a matter of elective affinity, collision, admiration, desire and sometimes even misunderstanding. One becomes brother and sister because one shares an enthusiasm, a rebelliousness, a way of standing up to reality.”

“Joans never accepts the world as a definitive inheritance. He cuts it up, shifts it around, mixes it and reassembles it. His work thus takes on the form of a vast collage of lives, languages, images, and continents—where memory and invention, history and autobiography, the real and the imaginary continually seep into one another.”

Pierre-Henri Foulon, “Ted Joans: Elective Genealogy”

4. Biography – Ted Joans in 12 dates

1928

Born on 20 July in Cairo, Illinois, Ted Joans would later change his birthdate to 4 July, aligning his personal mythology with Independence Day in the United States and the birth of the American Republic. Having grown up in a segregated America, he forged a political and artistic consciousness at an early age, one deeply influenced by the question of race.

1951

After studying art at Indiana University, Joans settled in New York where he immersed himself in jazz and the bohemian life of Greenwich Village, whilst building ties with the writers and artists of the Beat Generation.

1955

Following the death of Charlie 'Bird' Parker, Joans launched the legendary cry 'Bird Lives!', scrawling the phrase on walls and streets as a tribute to the jazz icon. The exhortation appears repeatedly throughout his work.

1959

With the publication of *Funky Jazz Poems*, Joans established himself as one of the major voices of jazz poetry, recreating in verse the rhythms, improvisation and energy of jazz.

1960

Joans met André Breton in Paris. He would remain part of the Surrealist circle until Breton's death in 1966 and became an important figure of International Surrealism, defending the movement's connections with the cultures of Africa and its diasporas.

1962

He settled in Morocco and began a wandering existence between Europe and Africa. Thus was born an enduring relationship with the African Continent which would become an essential anchor for his imagination and political commitments.

1969

He took part in the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers. This moment proved to be his closest affiliation with the Black Power movement, linking his performance poetry with the anti-colonialist struggle and revolutionary internationalist networks.

1973

He began *Seven Sons of Lautréamont (and His Dutiful Beautiful Daughter)*, an elaborate 'exquisite corpse' project that was to connect South American artists who show a kinship with Lautréamont, the Uruguay-born French poet considered a precursor of Surrealism. The project clearly reflects an approach that is both programmatic and collective.

1976

Joans began *Long Distance*, a very ambitious exquisite corpse that was to involve 132 contributors and is seen as the longest ever realised. The project played out over nearly three decades with contributions by artists and friends from around the world.

1983

During a residency in Berlin, he made his first *Teducation Films*, a series of experimental films shot in Super 8 that extended his practice to the moving image and was to include improvisation, travel, and daily encounters with people he knew or was meeting for the first time.

2001

Joans received the American Book Award for his lifetime achievement.

2003

Ted Joans died on 25 April in Vancouver.

5. Press images

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

The images provided by the MCBA are only available to journalists, for publication in their media and in connection with the exhibition and/or publication. The use of these images for any other purpose (including advertising or commercial use) is not permissible. Ownership, copyright, and usage rights, please refer to the captions and credits included in the press kit. When publishing an image, the existing caption and the name of the photographer must be mentioned. By downloading and using the available materials, you agree to these terms of use. After publication, we kindly ask you to send a copy of the publication to the MCBA press office.

Views of the exhibition available on 8 October 2026, 12.00 pm
→ mcba.ch/presse

Captions for the exhibition views:
View of the exhibition *Ted Joans. Black Flower*
Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne
Photo: Etienne Malapert, Karim Kal, MCBA, Lausanne



Ted Joans
Bird & Basquiat Lives!, 1998
Acrylic, ink, graphite, collage, stable and glue
on found surface and frame, 116,7 x 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



Georgina Reid, [Ted Joans at the Seven Arts Coffee Gallery, New York], 1958
Photographic print, 24,6 x 17 cm
Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans.
© Georgina Reid / All rights reserved



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
Some Sum Portrait of a Little Girl in Blue, 1990
 Collage on postcard, 15 × 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
MAU MAU Mona Lisa, 1953–1957
 Oil on board, 61 × 44,5 cm
 Private collection, New York
 © 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*
 Tirage photographique, 25,4 × 20,8 cm
 Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
 © All rights reserved
 Photo: MCBA, Lausanne



Ted Joans in his Astor Place studio, with the painting Bird Lives! and works from the Jazz Actions series in the background, c. 1958
 Photographic print, 20,3 x 25,2 cm
 Courtesy The Estate of Ted Joans
 © All rights reserved
 Photo: Laura Corsiglia



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 et Zürcher Gallery, New York/Paris
 © Ted Joans Estate, Courtesy Laura Corsiglia and Zürcher Gallery New York/Paris
 Photo: Adam Reich

6. Events

Reservation required for all events
→ mcba.ch/agenda

Please note: all tours and events are in French unless otherwise specified

Guided tours

Thursdays, 29 October, 19 November, 17 December, 21 January,
and 25 February at 6:30 pm
Every Sunday at 11 am

Guided tours with the curator

Saturday, 10 October at 11 am
One exhibition, two voices: a dialogue between the exhibition curator and
Laura Corsiglia, representative of the Ted Joans estate.
Saturday, 31 October at 11 am
Sunday, 28 February at 3 pm

Guided tour (in English)

Sunday, 22 November at 2 pm

Guided tours for Ami·e·s du MCBA

Tuesday, 24 November at 12:30 pm
Thursday, 3 December at 6 pm

Guided tours for teachers

Wednesday, 28 October at 12:30 pm
Thursday, 29 October at 5:30 pm

Guided tours for social work professionals

Thursday, 29 October, 10 am–11:30 am

Programme for schools and private tours
→ mcba.ch

Workshops 0 to 100 years old

Come with family or friends—or on your own—and stay for fifteen minutes
or three hours. Free admission/No booking required

Saturday, 5 December, 2 pm–6 pm

Rubbing gift

Create a notebook to give as a Christmas gift using rubbing techniques
inspired by Ted Joans' work.

Saturday, 6 February, 2 pm–6 pm

Surrealist masks

Create a mask inspired by the Surrealists using recycled materials and
collage—perfect for Carnival!

Workshops for adults

Saturday, 21 November, 2 pm–5 pm

Untitled

Poetry writing workshop followed by Jake Lamar reading a selection of
Ted Joans' poems.

With Nayansaku Mufwankolo, poet, artist, researcher, and lecturer at
HEAD-Geneva.

Free admission/Workshop in FR and EN

Saturday, 23 January, 1 pm–5 pm

Black experiences and resistance

Combining research and creative practice, this workshop takes its cue from the artist's example to explore strategies of resistance developed within Black communities. Alternating between discussion and guided creative activities. In collaboration with L'éprouvette – Laboratoire Sciences et Société, UNIL.

Events

Sunday, 1 November at 3 pm

Soundtrack to a Coup d'État

By Johan Grimonprez, 2024, Belgium/France/Netherlands/150 min.

This award-winning documentary explores the ways jazz became a political tool during the Cold War against the backdrop of Patrice Lumumba's assassination and East–West rivalries in the Congo. Part of Festival Jazz Onze +. Screening at Le Cinématographe

Saturday, 21 November, 5:30 pm–6:30 pm

Reading of Ted Joans' poems by Jake Lamar

The New York-born Paris-based writer Jake Lamar brings Ted Joans' exuberant poetry to life in a reading that captures its subversive spirit and profoundly oral character.

Reading in FR and EN.

Thursday, 28 January, 6:30 pm–7:30 pm

Ted Joans & New Black Poetry

This evening explores the dialogue between Ted Joans' poetry and jazz. With Truckthomas digger, DJ, producer, and digital humanities researcher at the University of Geneva.

Free-access activity

A mediation space is located on the first floor in the show's final gallery and features a selection of works by Ted Joans that are accessible to young audiences, along with open-access creative activities for all and listening stations with recordings.

7. In Plateforme10

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. The colours of the sound
25.09.2026–17.01.2027 (Espace Focus)

mudac
→ mudac.ch

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

Festival Interstices
05–08.11.2026

7. Information and contact

Florence Dizdari
Press coordinator
florence.dizdari@plateforme10.ch
T +41 79 232 40 06

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:

Plateforme 10

Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts

Place de la Gare 16

1003 Lausanne

Switzerland

T + 41 21 318 44 00

mcba@plateforme10.ch

www.mcba.ch

 @mcbalausanne

 @mcba.lausanne

Main partner Plateforme 10

AUDEMARS PIGUET

Le Brassus

Main partners MCBA construction

