



## Select Works

## A Family of Collectors

## Collection Strengths

## Current Exhibitions

## Past Exhibitions



Niki de Saint Phalle, *La Cabeza Ou Tête de Mort (Grande)*, 2000.  
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Location: Fourth Floor Gallery, Second Floor Terrace and The Green  
Time Period: 1960s – 2000s

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930 – 2002) was a self-taught artist who matured in the company of some of the 20th century's most important painters and sculptors. She was encouraged to develop her own style, which matured into a language of bold colors and expansive and active forms – a sense of both joy and mystery in a variety of media.

She worked at all scales, with sculptures less than a foot high and others almost 20 feet tall. The Bechtler's exhibition, *Niki de Saint Phalle: Creation of a New Mythology* on view March 18 through October 3, 2011, includes elegant and subtle etchings as well as remarkably powerful and disconcerting sculptures. In some instances, many of Niki's interests combine and the works which first appear to be paintings, upon closer inspection are shifting and rotating, powered by small electric motors hidden within the work. *Niki de Saint Phalle: Creation of a New Mythology* is a kaleidoscopic journey where things don't always appear as they seem.

Particularly because of the joyful quality in so much of her work and its powerful and seductive use of color, Niki has proven exceptionally intriguing to audiences who are new to the world of modern art and its complexities. Because of Niki's apparent simplicity, the works can be enjoyed appropriately on a number of levels and the more a viewer gets to know her work, the more intriguing content and greater complexity of composition the viewer discovers without losing the initial attraction to its energy and attractiveness.

Fifty-four works are presented in the fourth-floor gallery of the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art and. One work is located on the second-floor sculpture terrace. Five large-scale outdoor sculptures are presented on The Green, across the street from the museum.

Niki's outdoor sculptures are admired by audiences across the globe. Her playful, larger-than-life creations are constructed from fiberglass, colorful stones, glass, mirrors and ceramic tiles. Visitors are encouraged to touch and in some cases explore the works from the inside out as with *Cat* and *La Cabeza*, the brightly colored skull that faces the museum.

Several themes are suggested by the works in this exhibition, especially notions of beauty and the societal roles of women. In addition, Niki's work depicts gods from various cultures. Snakes and birds surface throughout her oeuvre as harbingers of danger or temptation—and also as protectors. Life and death are considered in forms general and mystical and sometimes driven by contemporary circumstances.

The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art is grateful for its partnership with the Niki Charitable Art Foundation in this exhibition.



Niki de Saint Phalle is closely connected to one of the Bechtler collection's most prolific artists – Jean Tinguely. Through her involvement in the Nouveau Realistes (a group of avant-garde artists who challenged conventional ideas of artistic creation) Niki met the Swiss kinetic sculptor. A close relationship between the two artists developed into a creative collaboration and eventually marriage in 1971. The couple worked together for the construction of many of Niki's major sculpture projects. When Tinguely died in 1991, Niki honored him with her first kinetic sculptures, the Meta-Tinguelys.



Another Bechtler/Niki connection occurs between Niki and Bechtler Museum of Modern Art architect Mario Botta. Niki collaborated with the architect on a major sculpture/architecture project, Noah's Ark, in Jerusalem. Botta also created the entrance gate to Niki's Tarot Garden in Tuscany.

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