Introduction to the Parisian contemporary art scene

Prof. Nicolas Baudouin.
e-mail : baudouin.nicolas@wanadoo.fr
Thursday 15.00-18.00

Objective:
The Parisian art scene is mostly famous for the dynamic first half of the 20th century. This course will introduce the students to the post WW2 Parisian art scene as well as to contemporary art in order to make them appreciate and understand the creativity and the dynamism of the artist community in today’s French capital.
Focus will be made on the diversity of resources provided by the city. Special attention will be given on the new artistic practices and places as well as the different actors that are involved, such as the artists themselves, the private galleries network, art critics, museum's curators …
References to the past and to the major artistic avant-garde movements and artists such as dada, geometrical abstraction, surrealism, expressionism … will be provided in order to ensure a better appreciation of today’s artistic concerns.
Students will be exposed to the concept of “exception culturelle française” that involved the public institutions as key actors in the field of arts.

Structure:
The semester will be organized between lecture-seminar with slides in class and field visits such as museum, galleries etc…
In order for the students to fully appreciate the quality and the interest of the art work that will be reviewed during the semester, references to the past and to the main streams of modern art and/or contemporary art will be an ongoing concern. Specific aspects will be developed in light of the galleries/museum exhibitions taking place during the semester. Students are expected to explore on an individual basis the Parisian private gallery network and share in class the interesting exhibitions that they have discovered. The artist that will be presented in the final paper will have to be identified during those individual researches.

Evaluation:
The mid-term exam on October 28th will cover slides lectures, museum visits and assigned readings. In the first part students will be expected to identify 10 works of art they have seen with name of the artist, titles, and dates. The second part will be a 3 pages essay on a specific topic.

The final paper due for December 9th will be a 5 pages presentation of a French contemporary artist, illustrated with representative examples of his work and discussed in perspective with the French art scene.
Students will also have to make an oral presentation (10 mn.) of the chosen artist at the end of the semester.

The final exam on December 16th will be an identification of 5 to 8 contemporary art pieces followed by a 15 to 20 lines comment on each of the presented artists/pieces.

Midterm exam October 27th 25 %
Oral presentation December 8th 25 %
Final paper December 8th 25%
Final exam December 15th 25%
Texts:
A selection of photocopied articles and/or texts will have to be purchased by students.

Students will also have to purchase the following book:
David Hopkins, *After Modern Art, 1945-2000*, Oxford University Press,

A few samples of the following book will remain available in the library for specific readings:
*Modern Art. Impressionism to Post-Modernism*, Edited by David Britt, Thames & Hudson.

For those reading French, the following reference is a must.

Specific places to be visited:
Musée d’art moderne de la ville de Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Palais de Tokyo, FIAC.

Program

Week 1. (09/22)
Introduction to the scope of the course.
Most important movements in early 20th century: Fauvism and Expressionism
**Matisse**, **Kandinsky**
Cubism and the birth of abstract painting
**Picasso**, **Mondrian**, **Malevich** (*White square on a white canvas*, 1918)

Week 2. (09/29)
Most important movements in early 20th century: Dada.
**Picabia**, **Duchamp** and the revolutionary “readymade” (*Fountain*, 1917), **Arp**, **Schwitters**,..., Surrealism. **Magritte**, **Ernst**, **Dali** ...

Week 3. (10/06)
Post WW2 French abstract painting; **Pierre Soulages** and the importance of gesture in using black paint.
**Jean Fautrier** and his “informal” paintings
**Jean Bazaine**, **Alfred Manessier** and **Nicolas de Staël**
**Jean Dubuffet** and the concept of “art brut”
**New Realism** or “Forty degrees above dada”, the re-appropriation of reality through the “accumulation” of **Arman**, the “compression” of **César**, the wrapping of **Christo**.
**Alain Jacquet** and his “camouflages”.
The decollage, or torn poster technique of **Villeglé**, **Hains** and **Rotella**.

Week 4. (10/13)
**Centre Georges Pompidou visit modern art permanent collection (5th floor)** 3.30

Week 5. (10/20)
Visit to the **FIAC (Foire Internationale d’Art Contemporain)** at the **Grand Palais**. 3.30

Week 6 (10/27)
**Midterm Exam** from 3.00 to 5.00
Narrative figurative painting and political involvement.
“The assassination of Marcel Duchamp” by **Gilles Aillaud**, **Edouard Arroyo** and **Antonio Recalcati** as a “painting-manifesto”.
Back to a **figurative painting** in reaction to the “bourgeois elitism” of the abstract école de Paris.
Gérard Fromanger and his bleeding flags, the blue assassinations from Jacque Monory and the “Vache qui rit” of Bernard Rancillac.

Alain Jacquet, Jean Pierre Raynaud, Bertrand Lavier

**Week 7** (11/03) Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni (BMPT) the inaction painters and the search for the “zero degree” in painting.

Daniel Buren will look at the world as his studio and as a museum (in situ art).

The “almost nothing” pictorial gesture of Niele Toroni

Support Surface (Dezeuze, Viallat) The deconstruction of the painting as an object.

Simon Hantaï, the « blind » painter,

**Week 8** (11/10) Christian Boltanski : obsession with his own memory as well as with the collective memory. Between expressionism and conceptual art.

Annette Messager : refined cruelty.

Michel Journiac and the French performance art of the 70’s

Orlan and the concept of “carnal art”

**Week 9** (11/17) Musée d’art moderne de la ville de Paris + Palais de Tokyo 3.30

**Week 10** (11/24)

Sophie Calle : when it is difficult to make a difference between life and art.

French contemporary photography, the young generation.

**Week 11** (12/01) Centre Georges Pompidou 4th floor 3.30

**Week 12** (12/08) Students presentations + final paper due

**Week 13** (12/15) Final exam