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ARTH 540

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Exiled or Equal in Paris? 1945-1968

American artists in search of freedom

This is the question that this seminar will try to answer. The post war period is always described as the triumph of New York: the development of the new authoritarian world art center. What this seminar will investigate is another side of this story: the large contingent of American artists (from Canada to Latin America) who preferred to go to Paris in search of freedom and success in a city still somewhat able to live under the glow of the 1920s bohemian myth. The fact that for many people on the American continent (gay, leftists, African-Americans, political dissidents) who had difficulties to express themselves at home made Paris, again, a center where experimentation was possible and where possibilities seemed open.

The seminar will discuss this situation, the importance of American literature, Jazz and painting at a time of French reconstruction and Cold War politics. Particular attention will be given to Jazz, painting and literature.

Artists like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Alexander Calder, Mark Tobey, Kenneth Noland, Jerome Kamrosky, Oscar Chelimsky, Hugh Weiss, Shinkichi Tajiri, Sydney Geist, Calgagno, Downing, Sam Francis, Jules Olitsky, Jack Youngerman, Ellsworth Kelly, Baranik, Claire Falkenstein, John Koenig, Jean Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, Borduas, Jesús Rafael Soto, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Martha Boto, Julio Le Parc....among many others will be discussed in context of the so called "School of Paris" but also as part of the St Germain des Prés bohemian environment. All this- analysis of art works, discussion of Cold War politics, of ideological debates around films-should help the re-interpretation of many clichés still populating the study of this important moment of western reactualization of modern ideas and modern art.