



# FRENCH CONNECTION

## CONCEPT

“At the beginning of the twentieth century, to think of modern art was to think of modern French art” (Harrison and Wood: 2005). This claim is startling in comparison to the relative absence of contemporary French art in today’s international art scene. Recently, multiple initiatives serving to promote contemporary French art both within France and abroad mark a wave of renewed interest. Three large-scale contemporary art spaces in Paris opened in the years following 2001: the Palais de Tokyo in 2002, Le Plateau in 2002, and the Musée d’Art Contemporain du Val de Marne in 2005. Exhibitions showcasing contemporary French artists both in France and in the UK include *Notre Histoire* at the Palais de Tokyo in 2006, *La Force de l’art* at the Grand Palais in 2006, and *Paris Calling* at various venues in the UK in 2006-2007.

**The French Connection: New Perspectives on French Contemporary Art Across Disciplines** takes advantage of this unique cultural moment; it provides an international forum for discussion across disciplines by bringing together artists, art historians, critics, philosophers, sociologists, curators, and filmmakers. Following the ‘promotional’ spirit of initiatives like *Paris Calling*, it will increase the awareness of French contemporary art and film in the UK while also offering a critical platform for conversation and debate. Topics include both the specificity of the French art scene as well as the inherent problems of decrying a ‘national’ art in a historical period that is routinely characterized by globalization and cultural hybridity. When discussing French art, to what idea of France do we refer? How does an art scene noted for its extreme heterogeneity reflect the cultural, social, philosophical, and political context in which this art is made? By questioning what qualifies as artwork and who is qualified to designate it as such, this conference raises broader concerns that lie beyond its specific geographical focus. **The French Connection** offers a timely opportunity to re-evaluate these and related issues which have become increasingly pressing with the rise of intermediate approaches in art production.

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