

GREY ART NYU GALLERY

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Groundbreaking works by key Venezuelan kinetic artist Jesús Soto come to NYU

Soto: Paris and Beyond, 1950–1970
opens January 10, 2012, at Grey Art Gallery

New York City (October 14, 2011)—The first large-scale exhibition dedicated to **Jesús Soto** to be held at a New York museum in more than 35 years, *Soto: Paris and Beyond, 1950–1970* will be on view at New York University's **Grey Art Gallery** from January 10 through March 31, 2012. Curated by **Estrellita B. Brodsky** and comprising a focused selection of approximately 50 works, the exhibition highlights this major Venezuelan artist's early career, after he moved from Caracas to Paris in 1950. *Soto: Paris and Beyond* offers a rare opportunity to trace Soto's visionary trajectory as well as his reciprocal influence and exchange with other members of the avant-garde. The artist's groundbreaking achievements in the fields of perception and interactive art established his reputation as both a primary proponent of kinetic art internationally and one of the most influential Latin American artists of the 20th century.

Drawing inspiration from optics, music theory, and phenomenology, Jesús Soto (1923–2005) invented a radically new relationship between the artwork and the viewer. The earliest examples in *Soto: Paris and Beyond*—oil paintings from the early 1950s, such as *Rotation* (1952)—convey a sense of dynamism through the repetition of geometric forms that activate the picture's surface. Soto soon extended these visual experiments into real space, painting vibrantly colored abstract motifs on layers of Plexiglas, which he then superimposed to create three-dimensional objects.



Jesús Soto, *Sans titre (Structure cinétique à éléments géométriques)* (Untitled [Kinetic Structure with Geometric Elements]), c. 1955–56. Paint on wood and Plexiglas, 24 x 24 x 9 3/4 in. Private collection

As spectators move around them, the painted forms appear to shift in relation to one another, creating a kinetic effect. Such implied movement becomes actual in Soto's *Escrituras* (Writings) and *Vibraciones* (Vibrations) series from the 1960s, which incorporate pendant elements—such as wires—that fluctuate in space. *Petite écriture noire* (Small Black Writing, 1968), for example, features curved and angular wires suspended in front of a dense background of vertical lines. By 1970, Soto's experiments with movement and interaction had culminated in his *Penetrables*, environments created through a network of suspended nylon threads or metal strips into which viewers enter.

Soto: Paris and Beyond is curated by **Estrellita B. Brodsky**, who received her doctorate at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts and wrote her dissertation on Soto and Julio Le Parc, another postwar Latin American artist living in Paris. "We hope this exhibition contributes to increased critical appreciation for Soto, who is such a central figure of Latin American art. Now is the right time to reevaluate major Latin American artists within a broader, international context," notes Brodsky. "NYU has long demonstrated groundbreaking scholarship and a deep commitment to the arts of Latin America, so it is especially appropriate that the Grey Art Gallery presents this exhibition of Soto's spectacular early works. Indeed, this show builds on the Grey's presentation of the landmark survey of South American abstraction, *The Geometry of Hope*, in 2008," notes **Lynn Gumpert**, director of the Grey Art Gallery.

Soto: Paris and Beyond begins in 1950, when Soto moved to France, and culminates with the artist's first major retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1969. Soto was one of many artists from Latin America who migrated to Paris after World War II, seeking greater artistic opportunities. He presented his artwork alongside that of Marcel Duchamp and Victor Vasarely in shows such as the seminal *Le Mouvement* exhibition at the Galerie Denise René in 1955, and later formed reciprocal relationships with members of Paris's international avant-garde, including Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely, and members of the group Zero. They—along with Latin American artists such as Carlos Cruz-Diez and those in the influential Madí group—shared Soto's interest in incorporating implied or actual movement into their works to create interactive viewing experiences. Soto and Klein developed a particularly fruitful artistic exchange, as evidenced in several of Soto's works that incorporate his French colleague's signature color "International Klein Blue" (IKB). For example, Soto's *Leño azul y negro* (Blue and Black Log, 1960) features a jagged wooden assemblage attached to a brightly IKB-painted Masonite panel. Soto created mixed-media constructions as wall pieces or as free-standing

sculptures that emphasize the textures of cloth, metal, and wood. While works from this time diverge from the pristine geometry of Soto's earlier output, they are united by his commitment to experimenting with visual instability.

Soto: Paris and Beyond is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by Estrellita B. Brodsky and art historian Sarah K. Rich. Brodsky's essay offers a comprehensive account of Soto's techniques, materials, and theoretical approach, while situating him in the context of contemporary Paris. Rich contributes a discussion of the spectator's dynamic relationship with Soto's art, examining how his works alter the viewer's perceptions. In the wake of many recent group exhibitions that have surveyed Latin American abstraction, this solo presentation of a key period in Soto's career clearly illuminates his central role in Venezuelan art and investigates the dynamic exchange of ideas between Soto and preeminent members of European and American avant-garde circles.

Sponsorship:

Soto: Paris and Beyond, 1950–1970 is organized by the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, and curated by Estrellita B. Brodsky. The exhibition is made possible in part by the generous support of Maria Graciela and Luis Alfonso Oberto; Mrs. Clarissa Alcock Bronfman; Agnes Gund; Stelac Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; New York State Council on the Arts; Fundación Cisneros/Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros; Christie's; Haunch of Venison; Mrs. Solita Mishaan; and Susan and Steven Jacobson. The catalogue is sponsored by InterAmericas/Society of Arts and Letters of the Americas, a program of The Reed Foundation. Additional exhibition support is provided by the Grey's Director's Circle, Inter/National Council, and Friends; and the Abby Weed Grey Trust.

About the Grey Art Gallery:

The Grey Art Gallery is New York University's fine-arts museum, located on historic Washington Square Park in New York City's Greenwich Village. It offers the NYU community and the general public a dynamic roster of engaging and thought-provoking exhibitions, all of them enriched by public programs. With its emphasis on experimentation and interpretation, and its focus on exploring art in its historical, cultural, and social contexts, the Grey serves as a museum-laboratory for the exploration of art's environments.

Exhibitions organized by the Grey have encompassed all the visual arts: painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking, photography, architecture and decorative arts, video, film, and performance. In addition to producing its own exhibitions, which often travel to other venues in the United States and abroad, the Grey hosts traveling shows that might otherwise not be seen in New York and produces scholarly publications that are distributed worldwide.

General Information:

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Hours:

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 11 am–6 pm

OPEN LATE Wednesday: 11 am–8 pm

Saturday: 11 am–5 pm

Sunday, Monday, and major holidays: Closed

Admission: Suggested donation: \$3; NYU students, faculty, and staff: free of charge