

# Art Galleries in the 8th Arrondissement of Paris

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Today in Paris, it is the Marais neighborhood—a sector that started developing in the 1970s but even more in the 1980s and 1990s—that epitomizes the place to be for contemporary art galleries. The implantation of contemporary galleries in Paris clearly results from a historical process that led them from the 8th arrondissement to the Marais, stopping briefly at Saint-Germain-des-Prés (or the 6th arrondissement) mostly for small avant-garde structures.

Keywords: galleries ; gallery ; contemporary art ; Paris

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## 1. Introduction

The space invested by contemporary art galleries is of utmost importance. This is primarily true of their volume and dimensions, which for decades have hewn almost invariably to the white cube model ([O'Doherty 2008](#)). There is also the recurrent symbolic and physical division between exhibition space totally removed from any commercial activity, and other spaces where other productive activities are carried out ([Velthuis 2002](#)). Not only is it essential to have suitable premises, but they must also be in the right place: The physical address carries a lot of weight. The benefits to galleries of being concentrated in the same areas are twofold: They are close to their competitors, which means they are close to the art market, and thus, by their collective presence, can boost the market by encouraging collectors to go to the same places built up as art districts ([Molotch and Treskon 2009](#); [Halle and Tiso 2014](#)). Moreover, the district's qualifying function comes about through the collective construction of this grouping of galleries (<sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup> [2016](#)) from which it benefits. Only a few spaces within cities seem suitable for a “real” contemporary gallery. Depending on the positioning it intends to occupy and communicate, and to achieve maximum visibility, a gallery chooses its area according to its positioning as a very avant-garde gallery—generally if it is a young structure—or if it is a more established name that defends more consecrated artists. In the art gallery field, the space expresses absolutely identical statements to those Pierre Bourdieu and Yvette Delsaut analyzed in “Le Couturier et sa griffe. Contribution à une théorie de la magie” ([Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975](#)). The example of contemporary art galleries, especially in the case of Paris, also shows clearly that urban space is alive ([Grafmeyer and Authier 2008](#)). Today it is the Marais (which covers the 3rd and 4th arrondissements (or districts) of Paris) that epitomizes the place to be for contemporary art galleries.

## 2. The Long Presence of French Galleries in the 8th Arrondissement of Paris

The French scene—meaning Parisian<sup>1</sup>—of contemporary art galleries is one of the three biggest in the world and the one with the longest history. London and Paris remain clearly behind the leader, New York. But Paris has had a continual presence of art galleries since the second half of the 19th c. and the time of Paul Durand-Ruel ([Patry 2014](#); [Quemin 2021](#)). Historically, at the end of the 19th c., when the figure of the Gallerist came upon the scene, galleries were heavily implanted in the 9th arrondissement near the only Parisian auction house, Hôtel Drouot ([Quemin 1997](#)), around the rue Lafitte and the Opera area.<sup>2</sup> But early in the 20th c., the contemporary art market gradually moved to the 8th arrondissement, around rue la Boétie. It was not until the inter-war period that a split between this “Right Bank” space (that is to say, north of the Seine, the great river crossing Paris and splitting its territory into two halves) and the “Left Bank,” south of the river, the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (which covers the 6th arrondissement), occurred. As time went on, and in particular in the 1960s, the Left Bank galleries generally became more avant-garde than those of the Right Bank. Spatial oppositions thus extended and reflected other considerations in the art field ([Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975](#)).

Tatiana Debroux, a geographer, and Julie Verlaine, a historian, produced a series of maps that show the moves of galleries and members of a trade association, the Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art, in Paris in 1948, when this association was created, and then in 1956, 1966, 1975, 1986, 1994, and 2016 ([Verlaine 2017](#), p. 156).<sup>3</sup> There are other, older, studies: In *Le marché de la peinture en France*, Raymonde Moulin provided a list of the members of the Comité

Professionnel des Galeries d'Art and of the officers of this group, giving the gallery's address in October 1962. As the list of active members of the CPGA was published with their addresses, it was possible to calculate how many were in each place: As a matter of fact, they were mainly located in Paris' 8th arrondissement (44 of them); fewer were in the 6th (31) and the 7th (11). The 8th alone had more than the two other main Left Bank arrondissements—the 6th and 7th—combined. Moreover, with the exception of four galleries outside of Paris (two in Cannes, on the elegant French Riviera; one in Fontainebleau—a privileged suburb of Paris; and one in Oran, in Algeria, which was a French colony at the time), absolutely all the other galleries were on the Right Bank (three in the 1st arrondissement, and one in each of the following: 2nd, 4th, 16th, and 17th). The shift of a majority of galleries towards Saint-Germain-des-Prés and even more so towards the Left Bank does not hold up: Still at the beginning of the 1960s, the Right Bank of the Seine and, even more specifically, the 8th arrondissement, maintained its majority status. Moreover, the officers of the association kept shop mostly in the 8th, clearly showing the dominant position of this neighborhood ([Bourdieu 1979](#)) in the Paris gallery lineup ([Moulin 1967](#), pp. 511–14). In all respects, the 8th arrondissement remained dominant. This seems to contradict Tatiana Debroux's claim, which overestimates the weight of the Left Bank, when she asserted quite rashly, "Since the period between wars, there are two major poles in the geography of art galleries: one in the 8th arrondissement, structured around the rue la Boétie; the other, on the left bank, in the 6th arrondissement, around the rue de Seine. At the end of the Second World War, the latter pole was dominant" ([Debroux 2017](#), p. 153). This statement is puzzling, since even this author refers to the figures concerning the population of the Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art members. That the Left Bank might have supplanted the 8th arrondissement as the dominant place for art galleries is also proved false by the addresses indicated for the 10 important Parisian galleries (and one in the Paris region) between the early 20th c. and 1970 in the brochure "Galeries du 20e S. France 1905–1970", linked to the exhibition of the same name in the Centre Pompidou<sup>4</sup>, which was held in 2019–2020. Also mentioned are the following galleries:

Ambroise Vollard: 37, 39 and 6 rue Lafitte, Paris 9<sup>ème</sup> (1893–1914)

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: 28 rue Vignon, Paris 9<sup>ème</sup> (1907–1914)/29bis rue d'Astorg, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1920–1940)

A l'étoile scellée: 11 rue du Pré-aux-Clercs, Paris 7<sup>ème</sup> (1952–1956)

Galerie Cahiers d'art: 14 rue du Dragon, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup> (1934–1970)

Jeanne Bucher: 3 and 5 rue du cherche-Midi, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup> (1925–1932)/other places (1932–1935)/9ter boulevard du Montparnasse, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup> (1936–1960)

Daniel Cordier <sup>5</sup>: 8 rue de Duras, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1956–1959)/8 rue de Miromesnil 75008, Paris, 8<sup>ème</sup> (1959–1964)

Denise René: 124 rue la Boétie, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1944–1977<sup>6</sup>)

Louis Carré: 10 avenue de Messine, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1940–1966)

Alphonse Chave: 13 rue Isnard, Vence, Alpes Maritimes (1947–1975)

Galerie de France: 3 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1942–1981)

Iris Clert: 3 rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup> (1956–1961)/28 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris 8<sup>ème</sup> (1961–1971)/3 rue Duphot, Paris 1<sup>er</sup> (1971–1979)/Le C.A.R.A.T, 19 rue Madeleine Michélin, Neuilly-sur-Seine (1980–1986)

Before the Marais (especially the section in the 3rd arrondissement more than in the 4th) started booming and asserting itself as the new scene of contemporary art in Paris, it was indeed the 8th arrondissement and not the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood that remained dominant after dislodging the 9th at the turn of the century. It is true that this urban

Right Bank area, north of the Seine, was now in competition with the Left Bank galleries, but the figures clearly show that it had emphatically not lost its predominance.

### **3. The Marais: Advent and Development of the Area as of the 1970s**

Beginning in the 1970s, the Parisian Marais neighborhood drew in more and more contemporary galleries; the Templon gallery, arriving in 1972, at 30 rue Beaubourg ([Verlaine 2016](#)), is still present. Among the other first arrivals was the Luxembourg gallery, 98 rue Saint-Denis, also in 1972; the Beaubourg gallery ([Saint-Raymond 2011](#)), 5 rue Pierre-au-Lard, in 1973; and Gallery Françoise Palluel, 91 rue Quincampoix, in 1974. The Marais was still mostly a degraded borough of Paris, but reclassification was on its way through cultural channels ([Rodríguez Morató and Zarlenga 2018](#)). As of 1966, the western part of the Beaubourg plateau had been chosen for a self-service public library, which was severely lacking in Paris. The project blossomed, and in December 1969, the French government decided to build a monumental facility including not only a vast painting and sculpture museum but also special installations for music, records, possibly cinema, and theatrical research. Although the library had been at the center of the original project, its presence then became merely desirable; the new plans focused on the creation of a section at the very least devoted to the arts. The winners of the architecture competition, Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, were announced in July 1971, and construction began in May 1972. The Centre Pompidou, also known as “Beaubourg” because of its location in the so-called neighborhood, was inaugurated on January 30, 1977 ([Dufrêne 2000](#)). The construction of such an idiosyncratic and emblematic building—a multicolored façade its detractors compared to a painted refinery—that contained major cultural facilities would bring about a total transformation of the Marais neighborhood. It acted as a cultural “hub” through the presence of a beacon institution that could feed a whole visual arts ecosystem. Contemporary art galleries rushed in, especially as the neighborhood was crammed with much bigger spaces at much lower rents than in Saint-Germain-des-Prés (6th arrondissement), where younger galleries then concentrated, especially those showing the most pioneering art. Taking position near the Musée national d’art moderne that was going to open in the Georges Pompidou Center would definitely facilitate visits from art lovers in this neighborhood. Thus, from 1975 to 1985 the Marais greatly profited from the galleries’ moves ([Moulin 1992](#)). They were bolstered by the announced and then realized implantation of the Pompidou Center in 1977, followed by the installation of the Picasso Museum nearby in the Hôtel Salé in 1985, which reinforced the cultural foothold of this area.

The physiognomy of both the neighborhood and the galleries was transformed as the old craft workshops or small industries that were turned into galleries offered much larger spaces than in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood. Gallery owner Daniel Templon explains that he was won over by the volumes of the space that would become his gallery on rue Beaubourg—discovered when it was still a hat factory. Its glass roof provided superlative light and its metal columns harkened back to the SoHo galleries ([Zukin 1982](#)) he visited regularly in the United States in New York ([Verlaine 2016](#)). It was not only the neighborhood that changed, it was that “the art lover’s stroll was no longer along a window street (whether avenue Matignon or the rue de Seine), but the insider’s path” ([Moulin 1992, p. 187](#)), with many galleries now open on to a courtyard at the back of their streets. As a gallery owner explains in the previous book by Raymonde Moulin, “We present art that is too difficult for the stroller” (quoted in [Moulin 1992, p. 188](#)). “The 1980s saw the growth in the number of galleries showing today’s art and their move eastward, the adoption of the New York model of spatial organization and the arrival of foreign galleries” ([Moulin 1992, pp. 184–85](#)). Raymonde Moulin points out that during the 1980s the number of galleries paying into an official agency gathering these structures, la Maison des Artistes (The Artists’ House), doubled. The number of galleries belonging to the Comité Professionnel des Galeries d’Art—with a selective membership—grew 15% between 1962 and 1990 (reaching 133 galleries in 1990).

In the early 1990s, Raymonde Moulin marked off four art neighborhoods in Paris: Rive Droite<sup>8</sup> (of the Seine) (its Right Bank, or the northern half of the city), Rive Gauche (its southern half), and two more recently invested zones, Beaubourg and Bastille. In *L’Artiste, l’institution et le marché*, she presented statistics calculated from the list of galleries paying dues to the Maison des Artistes<sup>9</sup>, 529 galleries in Paris proper in 1988<sup>10</sup> ([Moulin 1992](#)). There were far more galleries than those representing contemporary art alone, and the list included structures that dealt more in the chromo market. These statistics are provided to give a general idea since there is a lack of other data. They paint the picture in the late 1980s, a thriving period for contemporary art that was strongly promoted during the “Jack Lang years,” from the name of the Culture Minister of the first “socialist” president of the French Republic, François Mitterrand. The growth in the number of galleries of all types varied according to the neighborhood. From 1988 to 1989, the number of Rive Gauche galleries (5th, 6th, and 7th arrondissements) grew (from 193 to 212), but the percentage in relation to the total number of Parisian galleries remained more or less stable (35% and 36%). The number of Rive Droite galleries (8th, 9th, and 17th arrondissements) remained relatively stable (from 123 to 133), and the percentage in relation to Parisian galleries as a whole decreased from 23 to 21%. The number of Marais-Beaubourg galleries (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th arrondissements)

increased strongly (from 112 to 177), the percentage going from 21 to 29%. The number of Bastille galleries (10th, 11th, 12th, 19th, and 20th arrondissements) went from 19 to 30—it would go beyond 40 in 1990. The growth rate is the highest here even if the percentage compared to the whole of Paris galleries, going from 4 to 8%, remains low<sup>11</sup> (Moulin 1992, pp. 241–42).

The previous sociologist also said that in 1990–1991, “the distribution of contemporary art galleries in the generic sense” (sic) was approximately as follows:

“Left bank: 40%

Beaubourg-Marais: 29%

Right bank: 19%

Bastille: 8%

Other neighborhoods: 4%”.

(Moulin 1992, p. 189)

Tatiana Debroux shows how the Marais neighborhood thrived during the 1970s and 1980s: “The 1975 map and even more the 1986 one saw the embryo of what today is the main concentration of galleries, members (of the CPGA), at the junction of the 4th and 3rd arrondissements, connected by the rue Quincampoix. In 1994 in the Saint-Merri neighborhood, and even more in 2016 in the Archives neighborhood, the proportion of members was between 10 and 20% out of a total that had greatly increased. The emergence and then the consolidation of the 3rd arrondissement pointed to the creation of a third pole of Parisian galleries, in comparison with that of the 8th (relatively very diminished) and of the Left Bank (of comparable importance).”

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