

Everything You Need to Know about Poush Paris

On the 21st and 22nd October, Poush hosted an open studios event, during which the resident artists opened their workspaces to the public, a mesmerising and deeply impressive experience that presents Paris' creative community to the world.



Manifesto: 153 avenue Jean Jaurès, Aubervilliers. Image Courtesy of Poush.

It was a big weekend in Paris. Between October 21st and 23rd, [Art Basel's Paris+](#) took over the Grand Palais Éphémère (controversially unseating FIAC from the same time slot), while [Paris Internationale](#) was in full swing just up the boulevard and a spate of openings took off around the city, all of which was of course on top of an already packed list of exhibitions – Claude Monet and Joan Mitchell at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Alice Neel at the Centre Pompidou, Edward Munch at the Musée d'Orsay, and Anri Sala at the Bourse de Commerce, to name just a few. The veritable glut of eye-popping work on display over such a concentrated period of time has even led some to question whether the market for art fairs itself has started to become oversaturated.

Meanwhile, at Poush, a sprawling complex of artist studios in a suburb in the north of Paris, a rather different encyclopedia of contemporary art was on display. Poush started in 2020 as a group of over 200 artists spread throughout nine floors of a former office building in Clichy, another suburb just above the 17th Arrondissement. In April 2022, the organizers decided to take the already ambitious project to a new level, moving into a 20,000 sqm industrial campus in Aubervilliers. There are currently 230 artists, both emerging and established, from over 30 countries and a range of artistic disciplines, who use the space to make art.



Photo by Romain Darnaud.

On the 21st and 22nd October, Poush hosted an open studios event, during which the resident artists opened their workspaces to the public. The experience was mesmerising, overwhelming, and deeply impressive, basically a Bat signal stamped to the art world's sky that the creative community in Paris is a force to be reckoned with. To get a sense of what it was like, try to imagine New York's famous Thursday-night Chelsea gallery openings, but instead of galleries dotted across several blocks you've got dozens of studios clumped together in what begins to feel like a never ending, continuously unfolding maze of living work. There was plenty of free booze and chic outfits and music, but whereas Chelsea nights often end up feeling like an excuse to party, here the focus really was on the art, the artistic process, and the artists themselves.

Poush sets itself apart from other studio conglomerates not so much in form as in scale, which is more than enough – the basic fact of there being so many artists together in a contiguous space makes it unique, and also provides singular opportunities for those who have been accepted onto the roster (studios are allocated by an open call). Artists at the event described the thrill of being able to come to work and be surrounded by so many other creatives, to communicate about each other's work, to critique and build connections. The space lends itself to these sorts of networks – in many areas you need to move through one studio to get to another, so it would be difficult to avoid interaction even if you wanted to. It is also, importantly, much more affordable to work in Aubervilliers than in Paris – with the opening of their new complex, Poush also aims to help promote a broader cultural initiative in the area, fostering a space for many who end up being priced out of the city center.



From a critic's perspective, perhaps the only drawback of the enormity of the project is that it frustrates attempts to distill the work on display or place it in any kind of hierarchy. It would be impossible to list all of the pieces that are worthy of mention, which can serve as a reminder of the extent to which recognition within the art world is independent from the value of a given work. With all of that being said, it still seems worthwhile to mention a few particularly charming moments. Angel Guerre's incisions on paper and heavy wall-reliefs ask playful but compelling questions about the practice of leaving traces of oneself. Desire MoheMZandi's intricate riffs on textiles and weaving are refreshing and boundary-pushing tests of the medium. Max Fouchy's candle-wrap figures, which he creates by lighting candles and allowing them to burn themselves out, are light on their feet while retaining a formal elegance.



Installation by Max Fouchy at Poush. Photo by Romain Darnaud.



Manifesto: 153 avenue Jean Jaurès, Aubervilliers. Image Courtesy of Poush.

The most lasting impression from the event was the quality of the work itself. Whenever hundreds of artists are shown together, there tends to be a commensurate level of variation in the pieces on display. Despite the fact that (or perhaps because) the organisers of the event gave the artists complete freedom to exhibit how and what they wanted, the vast majority of the work was carefully arranged and effectively gallery-ready. How exactly this was accomplished remains something of a mystery; in the absence of a strong curatorial hand, the answer seems to lie somewhere in the collective will that Poush seeks to inculcate, and, perhaps, in the grandeur of Paris itself, in the excellence that it demands of those who would call it home. In any case, it was a remarkable testament to the vitality of the city's artistic community. It's also possible to discern a response, here, to those who complain that there is too much art being shown – which is that there is also a great deal of extraordinary art being made, maybe even too much to see, maybe even too much to comprehend.