

## Paris, Europe's Former Art Capital, Is Back on Top

Largely thanks to a wave of new galleries with internationally minded programs, the city has recaptured some of the energy and excitement of a bygone era.



A courtyard installation view of "Laurent Pernot: Antinoüs, Antinoüs," a 2021 show at Paris's Galerie Marguot. © Laurent Pernot, courtesy of the artist via Laurent Pernot and Galerie Marguot

By Noor Brara

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IT'S HARD TO pinpoint exactly why so much influential creative work came out of Paris in the 1920s, but what is certain is that its originators — or at least the white and usually male ones among them — felt free. For a while, it seemed enough, as Ernest Hemingway writes in "A Moveable Feast" (1964), "just to be back in our part of Paris and away from the track and to bet on our own life and work, and on the painters that you knew." That he mentions his painter friends reflects the artistic era's ample cross-pollination among disciplines and alludes to its frenetic socializing — at those famous libation-fueled Saturday salons of Gertrude Stein's, for one, where Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse would mingle with F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound and Edith Sitwell. When the sun came up the next day, some would seek solitude, but others would head to a favorite cafe to discuss their lives and their work and what one had or didn't have to do with the other.



Dorothy Iannone's "Forever True" lamp (2019). Claire Israël, courtesy of We Do Not Work Alone



Matthieu Cossé's ceramic plate "Fontaine" (2017). Claire Israël, courtesy of We Do Not Work Alone

And, as Mennour says, just as Paris is once again popular with gallerists, so, too, is it with artists. It's still a relatively expensive city, but studio space is at least becoming more readily available. Poush by Manifesto, originally established as a nine-story artist incubator co-founded by the former publisher Hervé Digne and the curator Laure Confavreux-Colliex in the suburb of Clichy, offers affordable studio and exhibition space as well as art classes and opportunities to connect with museum and gallery directors. "All the young artists went there after lockdown," says Melanie Scarciglia, a co-founder of the Paris-based independent book publisher Three Star Books. Over 1,000 people went to Poush's inaugural exhibition, a group show featuring the work of 18 artists, including sculptures by Guillaume Bouisset and installations by Bianca Bondi. That year, the institution's roster grew to 220, with 30 different nationalities represented and an average age of 33. This June, Poush will move into a former perfumery in Aubervilliers, another neighborhood northeast of Paris, in order to reconfigure its program and expand its offerings for still other kinds of creatives, including performance artists, dancers and musicians. The success of the venture, Digne says, has only been possible because young artists from across Europe and around the world are returning to the city in droves. "We have tremendous hope for the future when seeing what Paris is now, and what it is becoming," he adds.





Push by Manifesto's new space in the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers. Courtesy of Axel Dall

THE TREND ISN'T limited to the French capital, either. Last summer, in response to an urge to return to Europe after feeling overwhelmed by both the Trump presidency and Brexit, Lucy Chadwick, the British-born former senior director of Gavin Brown's Enterprise in New York, decided, with a few days' notice, to move her family not to Paris but to Biarritz, on the country's southwest corner, and open Champ Lacombe, the Basque town's first contemporary art gallery. Its inaugural exhibition last summer showcased works by Anne Collier, Arthur Jafa, Adrian Piper, Martine Syms, Josiane M. H. Pozi and Mark Leckey. The city was already something of a home away from home for Chadwick, as she'd visited with friends and family every year for three decades. Still, "to open a new company is a challenge, but to do it during a pandemic in a different country, using a second language, has been riddled with unforeseen hurdles and roadblocks," she says. "It's really only by virtue of having a community of friends that it has even been possible." Luckily, that community is only growing, on account of an influx of American visitors and collectors from Spain, London and, of course, Paris. (Locals have also become familiar with the gallery, as Chadwick has organized several community-focused events in the hope of making it as open and accessible as possible.) She goes to Paris often, too, to wander museums and galleries and see what's new. "I try to pack my visits with shows and meetings, and then return to Basque Country to breathe," she says.

For her part, Ibrahim sees her move to France, a dream realized after many years, as a kind of homecoming. She opened her space with "J'ai Deux Amours," a group show featuring the work of her entire roster of artists that was a tribute to the performer Josephine Baker, who, like Ibrahim, navigated having ties to both France and America, and demanded space for complex cultural stories, with all their tangled specificities, to be told. "Paris was the city for Black intellectuals and creatives when America wouldn't give them a platform," Ibrahim says. "One day I was in the car thinking about this and had a flash of lightning. I played 'J'ai Deux Amours' for my husband and said, 'This is the title for my first Paris show. I need optimism and positive energy and love. So I'm taking Josephine with me.' "