


## Article

# Art and the City: Contemporary Art Galleries Districts in Paris from the End of the 19th Century until Today

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**Abstract:** The space invested by contemporary art galleries is of utmost importance. 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. Moreover, the district's qualifying function comes about through the collective construction of this grouping of galleries from which it benefits. 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. Studying the implantation—here in Paris—of contemporary art galleries over time illustrates the dynamics that gird the installation choices and also shows how alive the urban fabric is. Galleries enter the transformations of the urban fabric, and when they are numerous enough, they also participate directly in its development.

**Keywords:** galleries; gallery; contemporary art; Paris; gallery districts



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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 (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 1992, 1996, 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) (see Figure A1. Map of the administrative system of Paris in 20 arrondissements (districts)) that epitomizes the place to be for contemporary art galleries. This results from the tensions that were rife in the French capital's 8th and 6th arrondissements, two neighborhoods that were simultaneously challenged and largely replaced by the Marais.

## 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; Queminn 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 (Queminn 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)/9<sup>ter</sup> 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 Michelis, 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 our 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,<sup>7</sup> 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)."

#### 4. The Triumph of the Marais: The Dominant District of Contemporary Galleries

The Paris Marais neighborhood really took off after 1986, gathering even more steam after 1994 (Debroux 2017), leading to its central place today:

"This new gallery neighborhood, inescapable today, is an outgrowth of the radical transformation of this part of Paris, one that was largely absent from the capital's artistic geography. In 1977, the opening of the major cultural institution that is the Pompidou Center and its promises in terms of cultural clientele, along with better real estate opportunities than in the older gallery areas, account for the fact that several of them quickly settled in the neighborhood, then were joined by many other galleries in the following years. At the moment, the 3rd arrondissement caters to 42% of the galleries belonging to the Committee (Professionnel des Galeries d'art), outstripping the 6th arrondissement (20%) and the 8th arrondissement, which had long been the dominant area but now accounts for only 11.5% of the members of the CPGA in 2016" (Debroux 2017, pp. 153–55). It must not be forgotten that these figures reflect all of the members of the Comité professionnel des Galeries d'Art and not only those galleries offering contemporary art."

In light of the amazing success of these galleries, it would be a mistake to assume that the choice of setting up in the Marais was obvious. Still today, even if this parcel of urban space takes the lead in welcoming many galleries, its drawback in relation to the 8th arrondissement is its lack of luxury hotels patronized by the wealthy clientele passing through Paris, but also because it is farther from the more bourgeois areas (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 1992, 1996, 2016) where most often the French collectors live—that is, the 16th, 8th, 7th, and 17th arrondissements (at least the western half of this latter district). The neighborhood's image, plus the mass effect, draw potential buyers to the Marais. As this person working in a Marais gallery that was previously located in the 8th and dealing in historical contemporary art said, "When collectors enter this gallery in such a beautiful space in the heart of the Marais, one of the first things they say is 'this is so far from everything! When are you going back to the 8th? It's really so much more central.' But you know here, as in most contemporary galleries, if you look at their client database they almost all live in the 8th, 16th, or 7th arrondissements."

If one considers just the category of galleries selling "real" contemporary art (Quemin 2013a), the percentage of the 3rd arrondissement that gathers the bulk of the contemporary galleries in the Marais would be much higher, even if, as mentioned earlier, this neighborhood is shared between this arrondissement and the 4th. Today, the Marais symbolizes the area of contemporary art galleries. This is where most French galleries participating in the FIAC, the main French contemporary art fair, which is incontestably contemporary (Quemin 2013b), can be found. Here is the analysis of the 48 gallery spaces in the French capital in 2019 that participated in this selective fair:

**Number of galleries by neighborhood among those participating in the 2019 FIAC:**

Marais (3rd or 4th arrondissement): 28

Saint-Germain-des-Prés (6th arrondissement): 8

8th arrondissement: 4



Belleville (20th arrondissement): 4  
 9th arrondissement: 2  
 13th arrondissement: 1  
 18th arrondissement: 1

The Marais area clearly overshadows<sup>12</sup> the others, as this district alone weighs more than all the other gallery places combined, and the gap between it and the next in line, the Saint-Germain-des-Prés neighborhood, is enormous.

Of course, the criterion of FIAC acceptance operates a selection among all the Parisian galleries that can truly claim to be contemporary, and that number reaches well over 50. The FIAC selection committee certifies that the galleries concerned are really contemporary (Moulin and Quemin 1993), and also attests also to the quality (Misdrahi Flores 2013) of their programming. Considering the link between the Marais environment and the type of gallery, it is not surprising that this district's share is boosted by using this criterion. It identifies the galleries that are incontestably qualified as contemporary and also the best among them, at least collectively. This hypothesis is confirmed since, if one considers the 31 galleries present in Paris that participate in the most prestigious contemporary art fair in the world, Art Basel (Quemin 2013b, 2021), the distribution in 2019 of their spaces by neighborhood was the following:

**Number of galleries by neighborhood, among those participating in Art Basel in 2019:**

Marais (3rd and 4th arrondissements): 22  
 Saint-Germain-des-Prés (6th arrondissement): 4  
 8th arrondissement: 4  
 13th arrondissement: 1

(NB: All the other arrondissements that were previously geographically and economically peripheral if one considers the galleries accepted at the FIAC less selectively were no longer represented).

Today, accounting for the implantation of contemporary galleries in Paris means highlighting the incontestable role of the Marais area. For established galleries there is virtually no longer any question—the Marais is where you have to open shop, with two slight (at least in numerical terms) exceptions: The mammoth Gagosian gallery of US origin has set up in the heart of the very bourgeois 8th arrondissement, around the corner from the auctioneers Christie's and Sotheby's. It met up with the important Lelong gallery, established on rue de Téhéran, which opened a second space nearby, on avenue Matignon, in 2018, consolidating its foothold in the neighborhood. In Saint-Germain-des-Prés there are only Kamel Mennour, with three spaces close by—the last of which opened in 2020 (and one small annex avenue Matignon); the gallery Georges-Philippe and Nathalie Vallois (which also opened a second space in the same neighborhood in 2016); and Loevenbruk. The "Rive Gauche" sign has become atypical and looks like a determined statement (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975).

## 5. Changes in Gallery Space within and outside the Marais Neighborhood

The Marais has been growing since the 1970s. Although the colonization of its south-east end with the Bastille neighborhood petered out, the galleries' foothold nonetheless solidified considerably, especially around two main poles. Historically, the west part of the neighborhood, around the Georges Pompidou Center, "Beaubourg," was the place to be. Still, this zone was later somewhat compromised and challenged by its urban planning changes.

The successive moves of the Galerie du Luxembourg—which later became Galerie Alain Blondel—are emblematic of these changes. In 1972, this gallery was at 98 rue Saint-Denis. In the wake of the removal of les Halles, the central Parisian market, vast premises became available with very advantageous leases. The partners thus made their gallery from an old banana warehouse. First specialized in the art of the first half of the 20th c.,

the gallery opened up its programming to contemporary artists. As Alain Blondel, one of its directors, said, “You cannot imagine today the enthusiasm this neighborhood raised in the early 1970s. Galleries, the most innovative antique dealers, bookshops and cafés saw a future that must have looked somewhat like the transformation of the SoHo neighborhood in New York. The public at that time was right on top of this migration. The Baltard pavillons before their demolition had almost constant exhibitions. Still, in 1974/75 a ‘mixed (public/private) economy’ commission was set up ( . . . ) and within one month the neighborhood became an enormous sex shop. We thus migrated to premises still in construction on the Beaubourg plateau even before the Centre Pompidou was finished.” So in 1977, the changes in the neighborhood forced the gallery to move to 4 rue Aubry-le-Boucher, in the Beaubourg neighborhood, right near the public square of the future Centre Pompidou, which was inaugurated that same year. The partners separated in 1978 and the gallery changed its name to Galerie Alain Blondel in 1979. It remained at that address until 2003, when it had to move once again. The gallery owner explains, “We signed a lease with the HLM (social housings) (this was the body in charge of two sides of the square bordered by rue Aubry-le-Boucher) for premises rough around the edges. The original leases were reserved for businesses related to art. So our neighbors were the Beaubourg gallery (partners Pierre Nahon and Patrice Trigano), another gallery whose name I’ve forgotten, and the bookshop Le XXe siècle & Ses Sources (in which we had shares). We stayed there for 25 years. Although we profited from an exceptional visibility, the pressure of the street life (protest meetings, street performers, all sorts of demonstrations often blocking our doors) little by little prevented us from continuing our business. We often took our case to the institutions who should have been concerned (the town hall, the Beaubourg center, the ‘prefecture’), referring to the original contract that brought us there, i.e., the ‘artistic’ vocation of this area. We were met with total incomprehension ( . . . ) We were simply halting the stranglehold of ‘brand names’ in the neighborhood. And in 2003 all our colleagues had left; we gave in and Starbucks took over our premises . . . The shedding of the neighborhood was complete.” The transformation above is quite similar to David Halle and Elisabeth Tiso’s analysis (Halle and Tiso 2014) of the SoHo neighborhood in New York. In 2004, the Alain Blondel gallery invested another space in the Marais, slightly more to the east, at 128 rue Vieille-du-Temple. It remained for eight years before falling back on neighboring premises they had at 50 rue du Temple.

Since then, galleries would appear to be moving generally to the other end, the east end of the Marais neighborhood. Today, four heavyweights in this market share a limited area at the intersection of rue de Turenne and rue Debelleye: the Almine Rech, Perrotin, Karsten Greve, and Thaddaeus Ropac galleries. Nevertheless, the Beaubourg neighborhood once again is thriving. In May 2018 the Templon Gallery, at 30 rue Beaubourg since 1972, opened a vast second gallery on rue du Grenier Saint-Lazare, a stone’s throw from the first one. Rue Beaubourg and its continuation, rue du Renard, and the perpendicular streets present one of the strongest concentrations of galleries in Paris, with, in addition to Templon, the Jérôme Poggi gallery (coming from the popular neighborhood around the North train station on the right bank of the Seine river in 2014), Ceysson & Bénétière gallery (since 2009), and also the Nathalie Obadia gallery (with two spaces at a stone’s throw for a long time, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri and rue du Bourg-Tibourg).<sup>13</sup> At the angle of rue Beaubourg, rues Montmorency and Chapon are both teeming with galleries: Bertrand Grimont, who already had two spaces before taking on the one that his colleague Anne de Villepoix left. Between rues Beaubourg and de Turenne, many galleries are densely criss-crossed—Art: concept, Eric Dupont, Christophe Gaillard, Max Hetzler, Marian Goodman, David Zwirner (who took over VnH in his space on rue Vieille du Temple), Xippas, Mor Charpentier, Denise René, Suzanne Tarasieve, Praz-Delavallade, and Lahumière, among many others, too numerous to name here. Gallery RX came from Ivry, a close suburb of Paris in 2016, taking over an old and typical Marais townhouse. Next door, the galleries gb agency and Chantal Crousel both grew their exhibition space in 2019 by annexing a neighboring building. Extensions are a basic tendency in Paris, especially in the most

sought-after neighborhoods; after that is opening a nearby second space. Although the most fragile structures close, to spread out is to parry and combine with the choice of the best implantation (Quemin 2021).

Setting aside the Marais and two other places, i.e., the 8th arrondissement and Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which are the traditional neighborhoods that welcome galleries, other areas and constantly changing ones have emerged in Paris over the last 30 years.

The public authorities undertook a remarkable initiative on rue Louise Weiss in a discredited urban environment of the 13th arrondissement (on the Left Bank of the Seine, but close to the suburbs), adjacent to train tracks. This area had been set up to welcome avant-gardist galleries. That is where the rivalries with the Marais galleries, generally taken to be the most well established (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975), were played out. It was inaugurated in 1988, and for several years, the place to see emerging contemporary art was rue Louise Weiss. Many highly daring galleries such as Perrotin, Almine Rech, Fabienne Leclerc, Jousse Entreprise, Air de Paris, and Kréo thrived there. Yet when they managed to grow during the 2000s, these galleries preferred to leave this environment: The galleries outgrew the premises designed for beginners, and the neighborhood did not entice art lovers outside of openings. Although the gallery Air de Paris began by extending and taking over premises given up by colleagues moving to the Marais, it, too, eventually deserted rue Louise Weiss in October 2019 and moved to the Komunuma site in Romainville, a suburb to the northeast of Paris. The move of Air de Paris, the last of the structures that remained on rue Louise Weiss, tolled the bell for this urban space as a district of contemporary art.

Belleville, in the popular 20th arrondissement for the most part, was another part of Paris that had, for a time and to great fanfare, competed with the pivotal role of the Marais neighborhood on the Paris gallery market. The year 2018 sounded the death knell of this ambition. In turn, Bugada & Cargnel (the only one with a large space), rue de l'Équerre in the 19th arrondissement, and then Samy Abraham (which got its start on rue Louise Weiss), not far from the preceding one, on rue Ramponeau in the 20th arrondissement, closed. Jocelyn Wolff also set up in the suburb of Romainville in 2019; Crèvecoeur and Marcelle Alix are the only ones left, but they are all small galleries. There are other galleries, but the fact that they are tiny and spread out does not augur well for their future. In June 2020, the Antoine Lévi gallery announced its move from the Belleville neighborhood to the edge of the Marais, on rue de Turbigo.

A more astute move was made by the gallery Backslash (in a 250 square-meter space) in 2010 to rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth, at the limit of the Marais, and the Paris-Beijing gallery. The latter has since moved to right near rue de Turbigo, on the north axis of the Marais, which Paris galleries have not usually patronized. A dozen, often small, galleries have moved to this area, attesting to the fact that a close proximity of galleries favors an artistic ecosystem.

The most recent prospects now are outside of Paris. The highly influential gallery of Austrian origin, Thaddaeus Ropac, equally situated in Paris since 1990, carried out a major symbolic revolution in 2012 by breaking the mental barrier that enclosed the Ile-de-France contemporary art galleries within Paris (Quemin 2021). Since then, and thanks to its immense and magnificent space in Pantin, this suburban city now has its place on the Parisian contemporary art market scene. In January 2017, a public institution, the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (National Fine Arts Center), announced its move to Pantin. The Thaddaeus Ropac move really did open the way for fine arts in this part of urban space, so that a public institution of the first order could find its place next to a leading gallery (Citerni 2018; Ansaloni 2018). Riding on this dynamic is the adjoining municipality, Romainville, which is trying to emerge as a propitious environment for contemporary art and, in particular, galleries. In October 2019, the galleries Jocelyn Wolff (created in 2003), In Situ-Fabienne Leclerc (created in 2001 and which, after several successive locations in Paris, ended up totally isolated in the south of the 18th arrondissement, another popular district of Paris), Air de Paris (created in 1990 and was the last remaining survivor of rue Louise



Weiss in the 13th arrondissement), and Vincent Sator (created in 2011 and nevertheless kept its original space in the impasse des Gravilliers, in the 3rd arrondissement in the Marais) joined forces on the same site, Komunuma. Spreading out over a 11,000 m<sup>2</sup> surface, its dynamism comes from a corporate foundation, Fiminco. As a sign of the times, where the art activity on rue Louise Weiss was a public initiative, the new Romainville site is a private one. Still, this development does not seem likely to challenge the weight of the Marais for Paris art galleries<sup>14</sup>.

In fall 2021, the Nathalie Obadia gallery opened a vast space in the 8th arrondissement, at the same time as her colleague Perrotin (who already had an annex there), who partnered with two others in a secondary market structure, and her colleague Almine Rech a short time before. Each time it is a question of branches of galleries that remain mainly in the Marais. With the emergence of a gallery neighborhood organized along the prestigious and very bourgeois avenue Matignon but with galleries maintaining their main space in the Marais, Paris seems to be reproducing, on a much smaller scale, the New York model. One neighborhood gathers the essential part of the main gallery spaces—in the case of the United States, that of Chelsea—but the largest galleries often feel the need to move closer to the urban space where the collectors live: the Upper East Side in New York. In Paris, the equivalent could be the 8th arrondissement, where some clients of the galleries live, and this could also be true of the adjacent arrondissements—the 16th, the 17th, and the 7th—other traditionally bourgeois neighborhoods of the French capital where most of their buyers live.

## 6. Conclusions

The implantation of contemporary galleries in Paris clearly results from a historical process that led them from the 9th then the 8th arrondissement to the Marais, stopping briefly at Saint-Germain-des-Prés for small avant-garde structures. The Marais gallery district has been growing since the 1970s. Although the colonization of its southeast end with the Bastille neighborhood petered out, the galleries' foothold solidified considerably, especially around its two main poles. Historically, the west part of the neighborhood, around the Georges Pompidou Center of "Beaubourg," was the place to be. This zone was compromised by its urbanization changes while the rue de Turenne emerged as a new pole. Still, the surroundings of Beaubourg kept—and still keep—concentrating numerous galleries. Studying the implantation—here in Paris—of contemporary art galleries over time illustrates the dynamics that gird the installation choices and also shows how alive the urban fabric is. Galleries enter the transformations of the urban fabric, but when they are numerous enough, they also participate directly in its development.

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## Appendix A

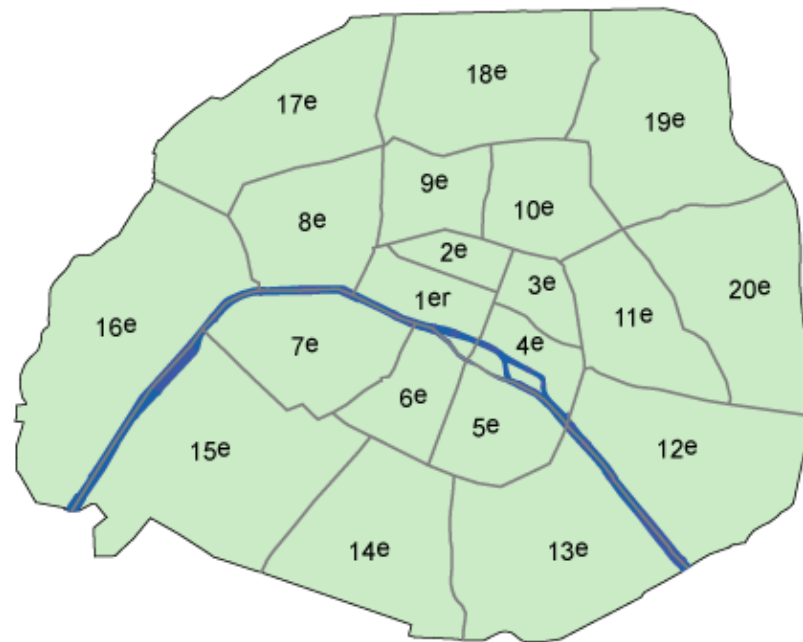


Figure A1. Map of the administrative division of Paris in 20 arrondissements (districts).

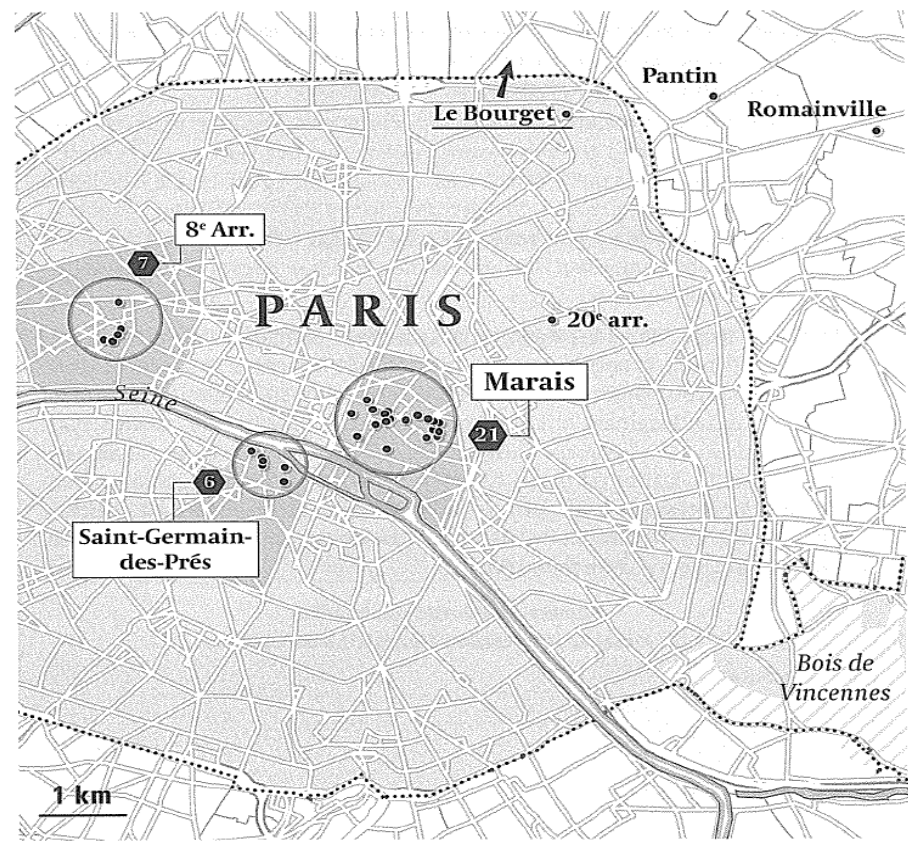
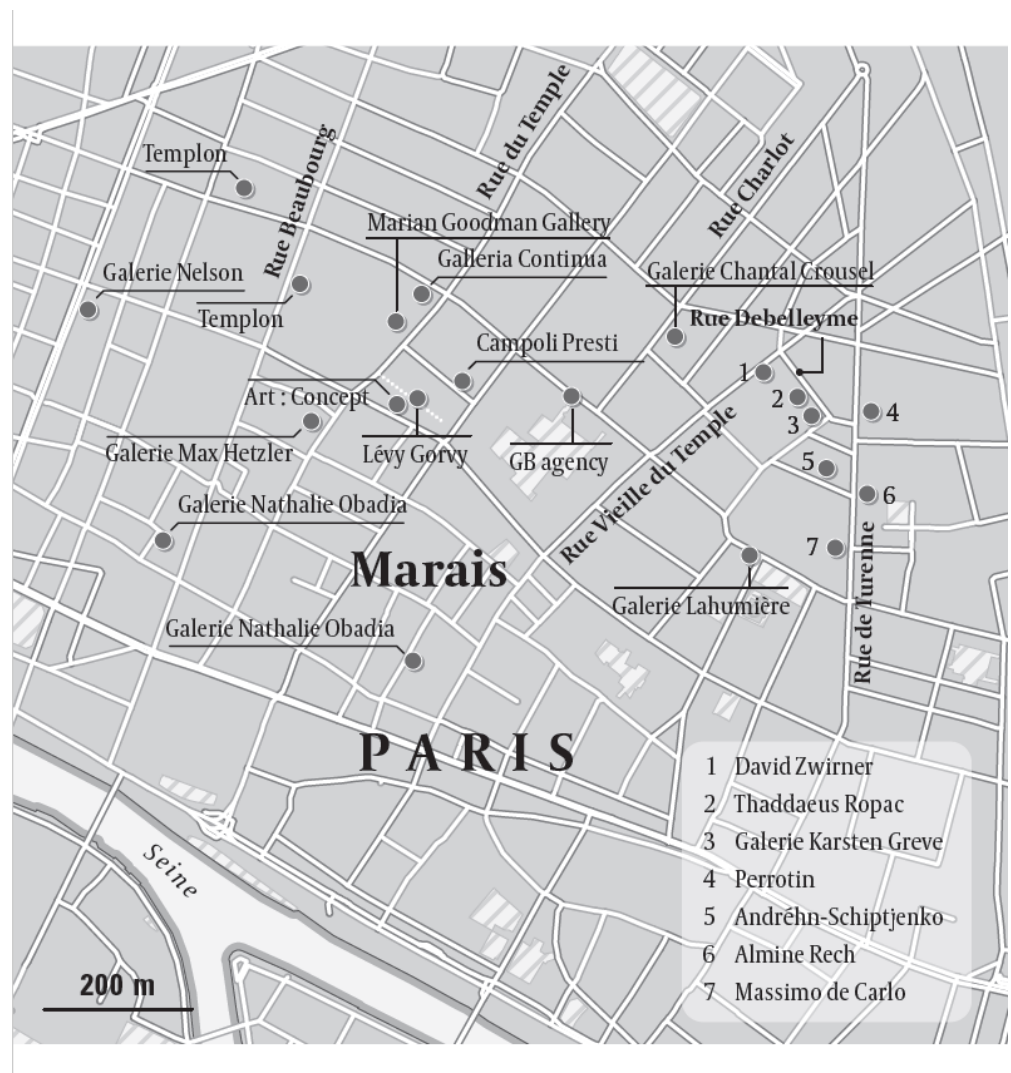


Figure A2. Localization of the main contemporary art galleries established in Paris in 2019 (source: [Quemin 2021](#) © CNRS Éditions, 2021).



**Figure A3.** Localization of the main contemporary art galleries established in the Marais neighborhood of Paris in 2019 (source: [Quemin 2021](#) © CNRS Éditions, 2021).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This does not mean that there are no real contemporary art galleries in France outside of the Paris region, but that there is no other city with a real contemporary gallery scene. Although intuitively one might think that the size of the city affects the existence of art galleries, in France, four names come up, and they are often in very small cities: Catherine Issert in Saint-Paul-de-Vence (a village near Nice, on the French Riviera) and Pietro Sparta in Chagny (a small town in Burgundy). Ceysson & Bénétière are located in Saint-Etienne (where it started out) but also, recently, in Lyon and in Paris, i.e., a medium-sized city, a major national center, and the French capital) by far the most populous city of the country), respectively (this same gallery is present in Luxemburg, too, and even in New York). For several years, the gallery of Italian origin, Continua, has had a space in Les Moulins, in the “département” of Seine-et-Marne, in the outer reaches of Paris. Coming from the small city of San Gimignano, Italy, the gallery has also set up in Beijing, China, and in Havana, Cuba. More recently, it opened in Rome and Sao Paulo in 2020, and then in the center of Paris early in 2021 (in the Marais neighborhood).
- <sup>2</sup> Annex 8, pp. 515–17, Raymonde Moulin, has a map of Paris painting galleries at the end of the 19th c. ([Moulin 1967](#)).
- <sup>3</sup> Aspects of the spatial analysis of Paris contemporary art galleries from 1945 to 1970 also figure in chapter 5, “la mosaïque des galeries parisiennes,” in Julie Verlaine’s book. ([Verlaine 2012](#)).
- <sup>4</sup> “Galeries du 20<sup>e</sup> S. France 1905–1970” exhibition, Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, from 22 May 2019 to March 2020.
- <sup>5</sup> The previous brochure does not mention this gallery’s arrondissement; we have added it.
- <sup>6</sup> The gallery owner continued well beyond this date.

- <sup>7</sup> In 1966, Alain Blondel and three partners created a tiny gallery that for several years first specialized in early-20th-c. art: the Quatre-Vents gallery was first located in the street of the same name in Paris 6th. The following year they set up very nearby and took the name Gallery of Luxembourg. From there they went to the Halles-Beaubourg neighborhood and launched into programming contemporary art.
- <sup>8</sup> This is to be understood as “the Right Bank” in the traditional meaning of the conservative “Paris bourgeois”, situated north of the Seine (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 2016). The Marais, although also located on the Right Bank, clearly constitutes a distinct social space.
- <sup>9</sup> There are far more galleries paying dues to the Maison des Artistes than those carrying contemporary art; many sell works more in phase with the “chromos” market (Couture 1981), a more commercial art made for a majority taste than contemporary art as such.
- <sup>10</sup> The number rose to 848 for France as a whole.
- <sup>11</sup> Notice the astonishing definition of the Bastille neighborhood, at the intersection of the 3rd and 11th arrondissements, extending to zones that have nothing to do with it and really belong to a category of “others.” The choice of Bastille without extensions epitomizes the “wrong turn,” according to David Halle and Elisabeth Tiso (Halle and Tiso 2014): galleries that choose a good neighborhood at the wrong time, or in this case, a neighborhood that turns out to have been a bad choice.
- <sup>12</sup> Considering the list of participants in the second Paris fair, ArtParis, in terms of prestige, the numbers show a greater dissemination in the city of Paris of participating Parisian galleries, but it is precisely because the definition of contemporary art is looser (Quemin 2002), and the overwhelming majority of galleries accepted would not be considered contemporary by the FIAC selection committee or by that of other fairs equally recognized on the international contemporary art scene.
- <sup>13</sup> In the fall of 2021, this gallery owner left her space on rue du Bourg-Tibourg, slightly off-center from this part of Le Marais, for avenue Matignon but keeping her main space on rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, almost at the corner of rue Beaubourg.
- <sup>14</sup> In its January 2018 issue, the arts review *Beaux-arts Magazine* announced the implantation of 10 galleries that would become Komunuma. However, a few days before the inauguration, only five galleries were listed, and since the site has opened, it has only hosted four galleries.

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