

With the World in Transition, Paris Again Emerges as a Mecca for the Arts

Many of the galleries showing at TEFAF Maastricht are from France, a sign of the country's growing presence in fairs and overall rising influence in art and collecting.

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By Tatiana Mizezwa Reporting from Paris March 5, 2026

When the European Fine Art Foundation returns to Maastricht, the Netherlands, in March, the fair will include a large number of French galleries showing in just about every segment, from medieval and Renaissance art to contemporary drawings and archaeological artifacts.

Paris has been a cultural hub for centuries, but the city is experiencing a [fresh surge](#) of artistic momentum. While art leaders agree that Britain's exit from the European Union played a critical role in Paris's renaissance, many also say that geopolitical circumstances in the United States, Russia and China, along with a government supportive of the arts, helped create the city's current moment.

"We are still very open in Paris," said Nicolas Fournery, a gallerist who is showing at TEFAF for the second year. "When you compare with the United States and other countries, they are closing, but we are not in the same mood in France." He added that while it might have been easier to do business in London as a European before Brexit and the pandemic, "now it's better to be in Paris."

With the United States turning inward by making visas harder to acquire and cultural exchange more difficult; Russia mired in war and sanctions; and China imposing constraints that make it more challenging to do business, galleries and collectors are looking for steadier ground. Increasingly, they are finding it in France, several gallerists told The Times.

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Thanks to a combination of government support for culture, relative political stability and renewed global outreach, France has become a prime source for exhibitors and collectors searching for a diverse range of art.

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"When looking at the art market across all fields, in the past few years Paris is cementing its place as a top incubator," said Laura Kugel, a dealer with [Galerie Kugel](#), and a member of the TEFAF board of trustees. "It's where we recruit the newest dealers and find the market to be growing the strongest."

Of the 275 galleries showing at TEFAF Maastricht, more than 50 have a presence in France, particularly in Paris.

Skeptics say that Paris's current popularity is merely a fad, and collectors may tire of the city's inconveniences or bureaucracy.

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But Kugel, along with other gallerists showing at TEFAF Maastricht this year, pointed to the growing number of foundations, museums, collectors and fairs (Art Basel began in the city in 2024) in Paris as a sign of its openness and accessibility.

"We have a history not only of art dealing, but also of creation," said Alexandre Devals, founder of [Galerie Devals](#) in Paris.



Alexandre Devals, a gallerist, said he wasn't just attracted to Paris because it is where he was born and raised, but because he could tell the city was on the brink of something. Dmitry Kozlov for The New York Times

"There are also restorers, gilders, framers, specialized transporters, art insurers and legal experts," Fournery added. "This infrastructure allows new dealers to establish themselves efficiently."

Astrid Malingreau, the director at [Friedman Benda](#) in Paris, said that when she studied in Paris from 2007 to 2012, the city felt insulated. Curatorial notes in museums and galleries, for example, were only in French. When she returned to the city in 2023, she said, things felt more international and welcoming. She attributed the shift to Brexit and, more recently, to the perception that the United States was isolating.

"There's been change from the center with French people coming back to Paris to work in art here," she said. "There's a lot more in English, which shows that there's a real effort to make sure art here isn't just for the French."



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Malingreau said that people's travel habits, which were shifting as a result of politics in the United States, were also benefiting Paris's art scene. In 2025, the United States was the only major destination to see a decline in foreign visitors, despite tourism growing worldwide, [according](#) to the World Travel and Tourism Council. About [11 million fewer](#) international travelers visited the United States in 2025 compared with 2024. In contrast, France welcomed [102 million](#) foreign visitors — the highest total of any country worldwide.

"The U.S. closing means people travel here more and stay longer," Malingreau said. She added that even when people traveled or relocated to other parts of Europe, they often choose to spend time in Paris as well, exposing them to the city's art. For collectors, there are more institutions to choose from, more dealers to meet and more types of art to explore, she said.

Devals said that when he left his role as director of the Venet Foundation in New York in 2021, he briefly considered opening an outpost in London or in Tokyo, but Paris was the obvious choice. Devals said he wasn't just attracted to Paris because it is where he was born and raised, but because he could tell the city was on the brink of something.

In 2022, he opened his gallery on the Jardin du Palais Royal. "Paris has it all," he said before rattling off a list of foundations, fairs, museums and collectors based in the city. "It's incomparable and it's endless. It's also accessible."

Steps away from the gallery is France's Ministry of Culture, the French Supreme Court and two theaters — Comédie-Française and the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. A short distance away is the Louvre.

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Last summer, Friedman Benda did a pop-up with Devals, and Devals said they both were surprised by how popular the show was.

"The end of June isn't exactly a time you choose for an exhibit, but it was great because everyone was coming because they were traveling — Paris doesn't have an off-season," Malingreau said.

The dealers and artists in Paris are also diverse in their expertise and passions. Fournery focuses on Chinese and Japanese porcelain, and he said that the amount of beauty and art that Paris offers makes it hard not to be inspired. Devals focuses on contemporary works from European, American and Asian artists.

At TEFAF, Devals will show sculptures by artists including Nobuo Sekine, Andy Goldsworthy, and Michael Heizer created from the 1960s to 1990s. Fournery will show a variety of Chinese and Japanese export porcelain forms and decorations, including jars from the Yongzheng period and Japanese sculptures from the Edo period.

Friedman Benda, the gallery Malingreau works for, will show work by the Italian design studio Formafantasma (founded in 2009 by Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin). Each will highlight art from different mediums from different parts of the world, yet each calls Paris home.

"Paris is unavoidable at the moment," said Malingreau. "And when you come here, no matter what for, you're in the middle of beauty, and that will always put you in the mood for art."

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