

# Baptizing a hip and discreet street



**Yohji Yamamoto**  
Catches fire from above: Maria Luisa Pommalion with Yohji Yamamoto at the opening of his store, original window screens in the main floor curves in a hat that mirror the staircase, and a detail of the shop's windows.

**Colette** Below, the temporary exhibition space in the newly renovated Colette boutique.



The sneaker wall on the ground floor of Colette.



Photographs by Eric Sedler for the International Herald Tribune  
Maria Luisa Iconic designers find a home at Maria Luisa's new shop on the Rue du Mont Thabor.

## Yamamoto's new flagship is the latest in list of quirky and original stores



**Maison Darré** Quirky and limited-edition home furnishings by Vincent Darré at his new gallery boutique.



**minaPo** For left, the minaPo boutique overlooks Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, a Polish church in Paris. At right, bangles on display.

By Suzy Menkes

**PARIS**

With the cutlasses and flourishes of icing on a wedding cake, this white box of a store looks made for a celebration. And the elegant shop that Yohji Yamamoto opened last week in Paris does mark a fashion moment: a flagship on the cusp of haute couture and hip style for the Japanese designer, and the consecration of a discreet new shopping street.

The store is at the angle of the Rue Cambon, emblematic as the home of Chanel, and the Rue du Mont Thabor. And it is in the latter street where a quiet revolution has been taking place since the Maria Luisa store, with its raft of artfully selected designers, moved there after 20 years on Cambon. Now the nondescript street that runs parallel to the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue Saint-Honoré, an attracting quirky and original shops in contrast to the plate-glass grandeur of big brands.

Meanwhile, Colette at 21 Saint-Honoré, which became the epicenter, along with 1066 Condes, of this new Right Bank shopping area, has had a facelift to mark its

first decade, while incoming stores continue to refresh the surrounding spaces.

"The street has come together — it makes sense, it's coherent — and I feel very happy and proud — we have done something for fashion and a lot for real estate!" said Maria Luisa Pommalion about Mont Thabor on the day of the Yohji Yamamoto opening party. She was referring to the view from her eponymous corner store, with its multitude of cutting-edge brands and intimate cavern of shoes. ("Thank you, Manolo, for always believing in us," she said.)

Mont Thabor has now become a family affair. There is an art gallery, where Pommalion's daughter works. And Ferdi, the restaurant run by her sister Alicia and brother-in-law Jacques Fontaine.

Then there are other quirky shops: the Maison Darré, a design gem where the former fashion specialist Vincent Darré offers his graphic take on interior furnishings; and Masomone, a shoebox of a store filled with funky and coup-de-cœur objects. Add an actual shoe store — Gianvito Rossi, opposite the Yamamoto store — and you have the ingredients of an intriguing and original shopping spot.

"I wanted it to be half a couture house and half a shop," said Yamamoto, who plans to make items to personal order. "It's by chance that we are on this street. Real estate things are sometimes like a love affair."

The windows, brushed elegantly with white paint, tell the story of the three-floor emporium, designed by the British architect Sophie Hicks. It is serene and spacious, with an unfolding original made out of chestnut wood leading to a gallery-like space on the main floor, where clothes are displayed on seven mannequins. On each level — the men's downstairs and the women's on the upper area — chill-out zones with soft white couches increase the feeling of tranquility. And the starkness of the "white box" is challenged by the geometry of a curving staircase and by marble-encrusted concrete.

The clothes? A seamless mix of the

different lines, with red facing off black for women and bright male tartans among sharp tailoring. Accessories are laid out on a long table, while rails-on-wheels whizz through garments to the changing room.

There is a Japanese shopping-vibe throughout this area: a sense of discovery and a desire to be trendy. Colette's makeover by Masamichi Katsurama and his Tokyo studio Wonderwall, has put a clear focus on sportswear, including a wall of wild and wondrous sneakers, brought to the front of the main floor among the techno gizmos, while beauty projects are now upstairs, fitted between the women's and men's clothes and Colette's art space.

"It's a continuity with before, but with better light and circulation, and giving more space to streetwear," says Sarah Lafrel, who opened the store with her mother Colette and says that everything is

done "very spontaneously."

For Mina d'Ornano, whose minaPo shop has moved to 82 Rue Saint-Honoré, across the street from John Galiano and facing the noble square around Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, the store is repositioned at a shopping hub. Adding to her whimsical accessories more clothes, each piece a unique and poetic meld of romantic modernism, the designer-owner says that moving home has been a voyage of discovery for herself.

"I know better who I am — and who I am not," d'Ornano says. "I want to create temptation and desire — I am incapable of making black pants — I want sculpture and color, embroidery and hand-painting."

The result? A store with a soul, where there is a sense of discovery rare in today's shopping experience.

Around the Cambon/Saint-Honoré epicenters, stores such as Jimmy Choo and Carlos Miele are installed. Roberto Cavalli is on the way. And a few minutes from Colette, Marc by Marc Jacobs has authorized the Marché St Honoré as yet another fashion destination to watch.

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An audio video tour by Suzy Menkes of Paris's new shopping destination.

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