

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**

## **New Parisian boutiques in all shapes and sizes**

**By Rebecca Voight**

Sunday, September 28, 2008

**PARIS:** Think of Paris shopping as a chess board. While the major players are reaching out to their clientele with larger stores and a more targeted offer, small, innovative boutiques are investing in elegant back streets for a highly intimate shopping experience.

Ralph Lauren's lavish new three-level hôtel particulier on Avenue Montaigne is so chic it is easy to forget the American brand's casual heritage. With 600 square meters, or almost 6,500 square feet, this is the largest Ralph Lauren store in the world devoted exclusively to women's wear and the first opening in Paris since the brand set up shop on the Place de la Madeleine in 1986.

"Ralph Lauren has always placed importance on connecting to the neighborhood. Avenue Montaigne is so glamorous, so this store had to be," says Charles Fagan, executive vice president of global retail brand development. The mannequin in the window dressed in sleek black leggings, a soigné blanket plaid blouson and beret pierced with a dramatically long feather sets the tone.

The store's ground floor is devoted to accessories, including the "Ricky" bag, which is offered exclusively to order here in 15 shades of crocodile, and the second floor is a showcase for collection pieces, including an opulent evening-wear salon, another first for Lauren.

The 18th-century building, once the home and atelier of the 1920s couturier Madeleine Vionnet, was recently a Jil Sander shop with a stark, minimalist interior. The design team worked extensively with local artisans for the French limestone floor studded with cabochons, molded plaster detailing and sweeping staircase. Original art and crystal chandeliers reinforce the Parisian home feeling. Next year, Ralph Lauren is opening a 1,487-square-meter building on Boulevard Saint-Germain, near Sonia Rykiel, which will include all of its collections and a restaurant.

Bulgari has just opened its fourth shop in Paris, but this one is the brand's flagship in the city and with 1,500 square meters on two levels, it's also the haute jeweler's largest store in Europe. After opening on the Place Vendôme in 2005, it took Bulgari three years to find the ideal space and the in-house architects employed 250 artisans from 35 different companies on the design. Located on the corner of Rue François 1er and Avenue George V, the store is palatial - from the exterior's diamond-cut columns to the enormous cascading chandelier, specially made by Italian glass artisans, suspended from the glass dome ceiling.

Nina Ricci continues to undergo a quiet renaissance in the hands of its creative director, Olivier Theyskens. The Avenue Montaigne shop, across from Dior, reopened earlier this month with a redesign to reflect Theyskens's modern, airy style. The powdery white store with fixtures in antique braided gold (in homage to the house's fragrance bottles) is divided into intimate rooms, giving the feeling of a plush Parisian apartment.

Also freshly renovated are all four floors of Lanvin's men's store on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, scheduled to open Monday, while on the nearby Rue Royale Issey Miyake will inaugurate his new shop on Wednesday. The store will include all his retail collections along with a space for art exhibitions.

A mysterious organization called The Kooples was the talk of Paris this summer when Terry Richardson style pics of Gallic rock 'n' roll couples, along the lines of the hot French band the BB Brunes, began to show up all over the place.

Was this a band, or a new brand of yogurt? The suspense ended this month when a score of stores, 20 in all, opened in Paris and throughout France, featuring a new clothing collection from three young brothers: Alexander, Laurent and Raphael Elicha, sons of the founder of the French brand Comptoir de Cotonniers. True to its images, shot by the 22-year-old Raphael, The Kooples offers a simple, affordable take on classic men's haberdashery with plenty of skulls thrown in; more feminine pieces are to follow.

For fashion addicts the Rue Cambon has always meant two things (at least for the past two decades): Chanel and Maria Luisa, one of the world's best independent designer shops and the first here to carry Olivier Theyskens (when he was independent), Rick Owens, Christopher Kane, Manolo Blahnik and so many others.

So when Maria Luisa Poumaillou decamped last spring, it was a bit of a shock. Her boutique's new space opened this summer around the corner on Rue Rouget de L'Isle, at the corner of Rue Mont Thabor, which is turning into an independent style mecca and a great place to hang out with the hip casual dining spot Ferdi on the street and the first midtown outpost of the macaroon maestro Pierre Hermé on Rue Cambon nearby, soon to be joined by Yohji Yamamoto and Cabane de Zucca, with their openings slated later this autumn.

Poumaillou calls her store's design "radical neutrality." The architects Laurent Buttazoni and Frederic Lavaud have said they were inspired by the apartment of the Parisian conceptual art collector Ghislain Mollet-Viéville to use a display concept that allows the clothes to stand out within the space.

Nearby is Poumaillou's men's store on Rue Mont Thabor, and across the street is Maison Darré. Previously a fashion designer with stints at Emanuel Ungaro, Moschino and Karl Lagerfeld, Vincent Darré has plunged heart and soul into creating a design house to offer limited-edition furniture, wallpaper and carpets, and eventually jewelry, tableware and textiles designed by himself and friends. Lighted by overhead operating theater spots, Darré's cabinet of curiosities shows off his work with artisans in Vietnam, India and Venice inspired by the human anatomy, notably tables with legs in the shape of femurs, in red and silver.

Unless you frequent [couturelab.com](http://couturelab.com) or are a regular at Neiman Marcus, [minaPoe](http://minapoe.com), with its small shop on Rue Duphot, was off the style radar. But that is set to change with the new store on Rue Saint-Honoré. The consuming passion of Mina D'Ornano, the wife of Philippe D'Ornano of Sisley, the shop is devoted to her limited-edition designs involving complex handwork from crochet to hand painting on exotic furs and silk with the artist Maria Jelesijevic. These are fey, ladylike masterpieces that fly above and beyond current trends.

Thanx God I'm a V.I.P. is a vintage legend in Paris back after a long hiatus in a new location at République. The ace vintage finder Sylvie Chateigner closed her first store in Les Halles in the mid-'90s when her soirée-organizing activities kept her up too late at night. Now she's back with a two-level shop that includes designer finds for men and women from Hedi Slimane-era Dior Homme to classic Chanel, Givenchy and Hermès silk scarves, and her specialty: obscure greats from all eras just right for here and now.

Finally, for those looking for a piece from the Monica and Penélope Cruz collection, Mango has followed H&M and Zara to Boulevard Haussmann. The brand opened its second largest store there, an impressive 1,335 square meters, earlier this year but only recently put the finishing touches on the décor. Inaugurated with fanfare in the presence of Valentino, who heads the brand's El Boton young designer fashion award, the store makes the street a one-stop destination for the fastest fashion on the planet.

*Correction:*

---

Notes: