



Who's Heating Things Up? by Jen Renzi

THE DEALERS WHO KNOW THE DEAL

An unassuming side street in Paris' easternmost fringes is ground zero for the city's edgiest contemporary art establishments: Galerie Jennifer Flay, Air de Paris and Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin. Four years ago, in search of off-the-beaten-path digs suited to their offbeat sensibilities (to say nothing of their budgets), this group of pioneering gallerists defected ensemble from the Marais district to the rue Louise Weiss in the relatively industrial 13th arrondissement. Despite the recent opening of the aggressively modern Bibliothèque Nationale nearby, the neighborhood remains a bit of a no-man's-land in terms of cultural offerings and geographic centrality. There is nothing peripheral, however, about this group's relevance to the international art vanguard. In addition to bringing a varied mix of emerging foreign artists to French soil, they are committed to promoting a new genera-

tion of up-and-coming local talent abroad.

The three galleries share a communal spirit—often hosting openings on the same night—as well as similar origins, having burst onto the scene in the late '80s and early '90s. But from gallery to gallery, says Jennifer Flay, "our programs are very different, which gives the situation [in the neighborhood] a dynamism." Flay herself has gathered a stable of European names who have achieved international acclaim, including Paris-based video and installation artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (pictured above with Flay). Emmanuel Perrotin demonstrated a taste for the cutting edge early in his career, exhibiting British bad-boy Damien Hirst as the artist was rising to fame. He has since remained true to his avant-garde roots, with a strong base of young artists, including Mariko Mori, Takashi

Murakami and Maurizio Cattelan. Air de Paris gallery directors Florence Bonnefous and Edouard Merino balance a decidedly global roster with rising stars from Grenoble, where the two gallerists met after art school and where they are determined to invest some support. In an effort to break down the walls between art institutions and the general public, the two hold court in an open "living room/office" in the center of their gallery space.

Despite the three galleries' diverse aesthetics, concludes Flay, "there is a great deal of mutual respect between all of us." It's an attitude that reflects Paris' resurgent cosmopolitanism.

Jen Renzi is a senior editor at *Interior Design* magazine. Photos (from left): Edouard Merino (left) and Florence Bonnefous of the gallery Air de Paris, Jennifer Flay (right) with artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and Emmanuel Perrotin. For fashion and photo details see page 255.