

Morris Columns  
Gaya by Gagnaire  
Hôtel Attitude  
Culture Bière  
Musée de Camondo  
Constant Motion

# PARIS

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## n o t e s

Euro Feb 9: .835  
Euro Jan 13: .824  
Rain Days: 14  
High Temp: 54°F/12°C  
Low Temp: 39°F/4°C  
Nat'l Holidays: none

MARCH 2006

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# COSTES EFFECTIVE

By Paul B. Franklin

Since the 1980s, the Costes brothers have revolutionized how Parisians eat, drink and socialize

Paris is no stranger to revolutions. For centuries, the French capital has been a hotbed for modern insurrections. The hit parade of such uprisings is mythic, from the toxic civil unrest that boiled twice over, in 1830 and 1848, and the short-lived 1871 Commune, to the romanticized 1968 student revolt. And one mustn't forget the start of it all—the last great Louis' last gasp. During the past twenty years, Paris has also been witness to another rebellion, the transformation of its sacrosanct café culture. Orchestrated by the indomitable brothers Jean-Louis and Gilbert Costes, this revolution, unlike its predecessors, has been a methodical and quiet one. Its spectacular reach, however, often eludes notice; there has been no incendiary graffiti on facades in the Latin Quarter, no printing presses churning out manifestoes, no heads rolling on the Place de la Concorde. Since the 1980s, the frères Costes, with aplomb and ruthless resolve, have single-handedly revolutionized how Parisians eat, drink and socialize.

In carefully chosen locations dotting the chicest neighborhoods, they have opened one hotel, restaurant and café after another, featuring decidedly contemporary décors throbbing with atmosphere and slim menus of mostly pricey fusion cuisine. They are currently sole proprietors or part investors in some forty establishments. At last count—they are notoriously private—annual profits hovered around 100 million euros. The Costes' illustrious empire includes such revered locales as Café Beaubourg, next door to the Pompidou Center; Georges, the restaurant atop this self-same institution; Café Marly in the Louvre; Costes K, a mod hotel on Avenue Kléber; the café-restaurant L'Avenue on Avenue Montaigne; and their flagship enterprise, the posh Hôtel Costes on Rue St-Honoré. "From the Bastille to Trocadéro, from Montparnasse to the Grands Boulevards—that's our fief, our little village," Jean-Louis boasts. "It is a magnificent achievement," according to Parisian designer and tastemaker Andrée Putman. "The Costes brothers have audacity, which is rare both

in their profession and in France." The story of their rise to power is an admirable one of two hard-working, determined provincial sons loyal to one another, to their family and to the bottom line.

The tale of Gilbert, 55, and Jean-Louis, 54, began far from Paris in the Aveyron, a long destitute "département" in the country's lower



belly. The frères Costes were first exposed to the hospitality business in the 1950s, when their mother converted the family farm into an inn welcoming fellow Aveyronnais on vacation from the capital, where they had migrated to seek their fortunes in the café industry. Guests regaled the boys with accounts of the money to be made tending bar in the City of Light. They listened attentively and dreamed. "We were hungry for the ease and modernity of Paris," Gilbert confesses. They resettled in the capital in the late 1960s. "For us, Paris was the universe. When we first arrived, we felt Lilliputian. We felt lost." Other Aveyronnais, however, soon took them in, and the young men slogged away in cafés around town, mastering their newfound métier. In the 1830s, in fact, entrepreneurial Aveyron natives literally invented the Parisian café trade, and they have dominated the sector ever since. The prosperous community, numbering over 300,000 today, is reputed for its solidarity and political clout. The frères Costes are the undis-

puted leaders of what has become known as the "bistrocratie aveyronnaise."

Dogged Gilbert and Jean-Louis cobbled together enough funds in the early 1980s to venture out on their own. In 1984, they founded Café Costes in still squalid Les Halles. Here, they devised a radical, new formula for café décor and service that has become their trademark. Their secret weapon: Philippe Starck, a rising star on the contemporary design scene. Jean-Louis recalls: "We realized that all the existing cafés were a bit banal, and that if you put together good design, good marketing, a good location and some hard work, you would have a 'cocktail explosif.'" Starck envisioned the novel interior as an homage to Budapest's railway station, a flock of his iconic tripod "Costes" chairs herded around a monumental wall clock. Up-to-the-minute lighting and music enriched the explosively modern ambience. "We were the first in Paris to put creativity and quality in the design of a café," Gilbert proudly admits. The wait staff was youthful, hip and well mannered, in

contrast to the bedraggled, often surly "garçons de café" at traditional bistros. Before long, the Parisian cognoscenti adopted Café Costes as its headquarters and profits skyrocketed. The frères Costes had hit upon their El Dorado. The income generated from this experiment set the stage for their progressive transformation of the capital.

Following Café Costes' triumph (it was razed in the early 1990s), Jean-Louis and Gilbert opened Café Beaubourg, an airy, two-story venue on Place Georges-Pompidou, in 1985. For the décor, they enlisted the talents of Christian de Portzamparc, who nine years later would be the first French recipient of the prestigious Pritzker Prize in architecture. He gutted the space and designed a sober, cutting-edge interior in classic materials (marble and wood) marrying clean, straight lines and curves. Round floor-to-ceiling columns punctuate the atrium-like central walkway over which a delicate bridge stretches, connecting the two sides of the balcony. Lighting (continued on page 7)

Over twenty years ago, I spent the better part of my first day in Paris in the Café Costes, the original Costes brothers' "experiment," mentioned in Paul Franklin's very fine cover article. Maybe what kept my friend and I bolted to our chairs was the procession of international, twig-like models that walked its aisles as if on a catwalk. Or, the brooding French girls, whom I had never had the occasion to observe, pensively staring at the ceiling, smoking their cigarettes and scribbling in their journals. There was something that just felt good about being there, like we were part of cutting-edge Paris (and we hadn't even seen Paris, yet). It was cool but not pretentious.

Since then, I have spent countless hours in Costes establishments. In fact, I would estimate that the first neurons to fire for the majority of the articles you have read in Paris Notes fired while a long list of writers and I sat sipping Costes coffee or tea or citron pressé (mainly at the Café Beaubourg and the Café Marly). Once in a while, we would have a casual meal—you rarely need reservations, you can eat light, prices are reasonable, and if you want just a snack, that's ok.

But now, I am weaning myself off of the Costes brothers for another style of café/restaurant/meeting place. These days, when you meet with me, it is likely to be at Le Fumoir (just in front of the only Métro entrance to the Louvre/Rivoli stop on the no. 1 line). Le Fumoir is dark, relaxed, with lots of wood and leather chairs. It has an upbeat vibe, and is more British in feel than Parisian. While the food is a bit more refined than at Costes places, and a bit more expensive, it's not a big production. Could this be the new Costes antidote? We'll see.

—Mark Eversman, Editor  
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• What makes Paris Paris? In part, the city's "mobilier urbain," or urban furniture. Perhaps the most recognizable elements are the **Morris Columns**, those dark-green, one-story-high cylinders with the hexagonal or circular brims and teardrop tops. Created by printer Gabriel Morris in 1868, the columns are used to advertise theater events and movies. To "unclutter" Paris streets, the City has announced plans to remove 183 of its current 773 columns. Intense negative reaction by theater owners, who depend on the columns, has spread to the general public—seems there is a great deal of affection for the columns.

• The **Louvre** is king. With 7.3 million visitors in 2005 (600,000 more than in 2004), it has surpassed the Eiffel Tower (6.5 million visitors in 2005) as Paris' most visited "attraction." Officials attribute this rise to several factors, including: the finishing of the Salle des Etats (Mona Lisa's new home); the notoriety from the "Da Vinci Code"; better publicizing of Wednesday and Friday evening hours; and a general rise in tourism to Paris.

• A year from now, Parisians will vote again for mayor of Paris. Socialist **Bertrand Delanoë** has held the position since 2001. After an extremely strong four years, his popularity has declined rapidly—losing the 2012 Olympics to London was a turning point. In 2003, according to a Le Parisien poll, about seventy-seven percent of Parisians were "satisfied" with his performance (this poll was taken several months after the mayor had been stabbed at Nuit Blanche, an event he organized). A recent poll, however, determined that the number of satisfied Parisians had slipped to sixty percent—still a number most politicians can only dream about. A handful of city politicians are considered contenders to take the mayor's job; center-right Françoise de Panafieu is thought to be the "most dangerous." In 2003, a head-to-head poll indicated that Mayor Delanoë would have trounced de Panafieu. Today, the Le Parisien poll said, the mayor would win forty-nine to thirty-five. The gap is narrowing.

• It's not often when Paris follows Lyon's lead. But, where **bikes** are concerned, that's just what Paris is doing. Although the City actively promotes riding bikes—to justify building 180 miles of bicycle lanes in the last ten years—only one percent of all "déplacements Parisiens" are on two wheels. Last year, Lyon introduced a bike service called Vélo V (read V Love) that has proved a resounding success. Two thousand bikes are available for rental (first half hour free) at

entrances to 173 Métro stations (pick up a bike at a Métro station, drop it off at another). Each day 15,000 rentals are made and, it is estimated, 25,000 miles are ridden. Around 32,000 Lyon residents have rented Vélo V bikes since May 2005. Paris is jealous; Deputy Mayor Denis Baupin recently said that Paris is working to create a similar system as soon as possible, which he believes will be within a year.

• When you see two of those enameled **street signs**, the blue ones with green trim, on the same building, it's not by mistake. The higher signs date to the nineteenth century; they were placed thirteen feet up so they could be easily viewed by carriage drivers. Since 2000, the City has been adding lower signs so pedestrians and drivers could see them more easily. It was decided to leave the old signs in place because they are made of stone, which is embedded in the sides of buildings. To remove them would have left indentations that would have been too expensive to fill in. The new signs cost the City 35E each, and contain additional historical information where there is an interesting story behind the street's name.

• By the end of the eighties, almost all of Paris' small, neighborhood record stores had disappeared. Now, slowly but surely, Paris' neighborhood **book stores** are facing the same demise. There are now 970 book stores in Paris (the 5th arrondissement has the most with 163, followed by the 6th with 151), but since 2000 eighty have closed. The small shops are struggling to compete with the "grandes surfaces culturelles," and online buying. Recently, a new association called Auteurs, Libraires, Editeurs, Partenaires (ALEP) was formed to find new ways to encourage Parisians to buy their books in local book stores. The association has determined that the neighborhood book stores can survive if they refuse "standardization," improve their customer interface and, key word, specialize—that is, find a niche and cover it better than large stores.

• Ma Langue au Chat (roughly translates to "I give up, I don't know") is a company that organizes the newest Paris phenomenon: the **treasure hunt**. The next hunt is in March (not available at press time), when over 5,000 people are expected to go to the Ma Langue au Chat website (www.malangueauchat.com), where they will receive the first instruction of where to go in Paris for the next instruction, and so on. The ultimate goal is to be the first to find a "diablotin," a small devil doll, hidden somewhere in the city. Note: it's in French.

• PARIS •  
**B I T E S**  
By Rosa Jackson



As editorial director of the French restaurant guide Gault Millau, Luc Dubanchet had the power to make chefs cower in their clogs.

Gault Millau comes second only to Michelin in terms of its influence on French restaurants, and a demotion in the guide was thought to be one of the factors that may have tipped the late Burgundy chef Bernard Loiseau over the brink in 2003.

Instead of arrogantly wielding his pen, however, Dubanchet was always on the lookout for young talent that might be lurking in unexpected places, far from the urban centers. These chefs might have earned a satisfactory twelve or thirteen points on Gault Millau's scale of twenty—the same grading system used in French schools, which might explain its emotional impact—yet Dubanchet thought they deserved much greater recognition.

He felt strongly enough about this to leave Gault Millau, taking with him its artistic director Laurent Seminel, and launch the subscription-only French magazine *Omnivore* ([www.omnivore.fr](http://www.omnivore.fr)). Its first issue, in September 2003, appeared one month after Arthur Lubow stated in the *New York Times* that the Spanish were out-cooking the French. Dubanchet titled his inaugural issue “La jeune cuisine starts today.”

“I thought Lubow’s article was tremendous,” he told me, “but I’ve spent the last two years trying to prove him wrong.”

As this comment suggests, Dubanchet doesn’t take a reverential approach to French cuisine. Recently, he covered more than 37,000 miles in France to select restaurants for *Omnivore*’s first “travel diary,” *Les 150 Tables de la Jeune Cuisine* (Les éditions de l’épure). Just as he avoids using the word “guidebook,” he considers himself a journalist, not a critic. What interests him is not “terroir”—the notion of roots in a particular region—but a chef’s creativity and audacity. A random example is the “warm sea bread sashimi with crumble” from the Auberge de Chavannes in the Jura region, whose chef, Nicolas Pourcheresse, makes French provincial cooking seem positively cool.

What about Paris? Dubanchet is far from complimentary, saying it is “certainly not the world’s most exciting culinary capital.” Only nineteen chefs represent Paris in his book, and oddly five of these have at least two Michelin stars—he says this is a way of paying tribute to their influence on the younger generation. Personally I take issue with his inclusion on such

“Reminds you of baby food, doesn’t it?” said the waitress of my cucumber-and-pear purée accompaniment (no, it hadn’t until she said so)

a short list of both La Famille and Le Réfectoire, run by the same hip pair, but other picks seem more logical (Le Comptoir du Relais, Flora, Ze Kitchen Galerie, Jean).

If his view of the current state of Paris dining is a little depressing, at least he is more optimistic than Christian Constant (see interview on page 6) about the future of French cooking.

“A restaurant is also what you put into it,” he says. “Everyone can find their ideal restaurant. You just need to open your ears, and since the release of our travel diary I’ve had a lot of phone calls. There is a real dynamism, and if you’re a little curious it’s easy to find new names. They are there but not very visible, and I want to make that generation visible.”

When I asked him how he would compare la jeune cuisine to “le fooding”—the movement founded by young journalist Alexandre Cammas, who has organized a series of accessible events involving well-known chefs—I could feel Dubanchet bristle even over the phone line.

“I think it’s a question of substance. La jeune cuisine is backed up by tens of thousands of words. We’ve written hundreds of articles since creating the magazine.”

Both of the chefs I’ll be writing about this month perfectly illustrate la jeune cuisine, even if one of them is not so jeune. Pierre Gagnaire has three Michelin stars—Dubanchet, incidentally, considers the Michelin system “harmful and unacceptable”—while self-taught chef Christophe Beaufront runs his own bistro in an out-of-the-way arrondissement.

I have long admired Gagnaire’s individuality, and he is certainly young in spirit if not particularly in age (*Omnivore* helpfully lists his birth date as April 4, 1950). The only problem with his food, at least for the average person, is the terrifying prices at his eponymous restaurant—a starter alone can set you back more than 120E. Fortunately, Gagnaire recently took over the well-known seafood restaurant *Gaya Rive Gauche*, renaming it **Gaya by Pierre Gagnaire**.

Here I like the modern new décor, particularly the bright main floor with its fish-scale wall and bar that feels welcoming for solo diners. Upstairs the lack of natural light is a little disturbing, something I hadn’t noticed until our unusually frank waitress pointed it out. Printed in purple ink on a simple white sheet of paper, the menu shows that Gagnaire is trying to stay away from the superfluous in order to keep prices down. What a relief to see starters at less than 20E and main courses at less than 30E, even if

the great man himself is not in the kitchen.

Served in a martini glass, my “pétales de cabillaud” (flakes of cod) with soba noodles, mango, grapefruit and wasabi was a good idea that didn’t quite work for me, simply because the sesame oil taste was a little overwhelming. Also typical of his style was a seafood jelly with neatly arranged coco de Paimpol white beans and Spanish ham. The line is blurred between starters and main courses with menu titles such as “insolites” (unexpected) and “essentiel.” To continue, I chose strips of wild sea bass simply sautéed and deglazed with manzanilla sherry—exactly as advertised. “Reminds you of baby food, doesn’t it?” said the waitress of my cucumber-and-pear purée accompaniment (no, it hadn’t until she said so).

Conclusion? As so often happens with Gagnaire, not everything works and yet it’s exciting to experience his unique take on French cuisine. The new *Gaya* is refreshing in a city where most seafood restaurants have fallen into a minimalist rut.

I’m running out of space to tell you about my meal at **L’Avant-Goût**. This bistro is only two Métro stops from my apartment, but I rarely go there—I blame its three closing days a week (Sat-Mon) and its popularity. I have read that the service can be iffy, but this was not my experience. When I visited with a vegan, staff did their best to cater to her needs (despite a little eye-rolling from the chef’s wife), presenting her with a beautiful plate of accompaniments. They didn’t turn a hair, either, when half our party of four arrived forty-five minutes late for lunch.

Most representative of “la jeune cuisine” is Beaufront’s pot-au-feu de cochon aux épices, a much-written-about dish that has been on his menu for years. He got bored of serving it in a cast-iron pot, so he now presents the pork, sweet potato and fennel garnished with deep-fried ginger on a plate with a glass of bouillon to drink on the side. It was very good, not earth-shaking, and I was a little let down by the very ordinary moelleux au chocolat—however, I adored my starter of piquillo pepper stuffed with smoked haddock rillettes. The dining room is colorful and comfortable, making this a fine spot for an affordable bistro feast if you’re visiting the Butte-aux-Cailles area.

•Gaya by Pierre Gagnaire: 44 Rue du Bac, 7th. Tel: 1-45-44-73-73. Site: [www.pierre-gagnaire.com](http://www.pierre-gagnaire.com).

•L’Avant-Goût: 26 Rue Bobillot, 13th. Tel: 1-53-80-24-00.

# HÔTEL ATTITUDE

The new wave of Paris hotels with attitude is anything but bland

“Pains français, viennois, seigle et gruau” spell out the gilt letters on the façade, but it isn’t freshly baked bread “à l’ancienne” that has led me to the corner of rues de Poitou and Saintonge. Discreet almost to the point of camouflage, this former bakery in the Marais is part of the phenomenon that has transformed the Paris hotel scene over the last three years.

The city has been slow to embrace the boutique hotels of New York or London, but it’s certainly making up for lost time now. Lavish in tulle, sassy in chrome or oozing bygone European charm down to the last stick of polished oak, the new wave of Paris hotels is anything but bland. With their can-do service and distinctive ambience, they aspire to offer guests something more memorable than just an agreeable stay at a “bonne adresse.” The hotel-of-distinction ticket no longer quite cuts the ice. Enter the Hôtel Attitude.

And attitude comes by the bushel at the **Hôtel du Petit Moulin** (29 Rue de Poitou, 4th, [www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com](http://www.hoteldupetitmoulin.com)). Opened to a fanfare of publicity barely a year ago, it’s what you get when you radically renovate two crumbling seventeenth-century buildings, then commission a leading couturier to work magic on them. The collaboration with Christian Lacroix came about largely by chance, says hotel manager Nadia Murano. “Monsieur Lacroix wanted to work with a hotel, and here we were, renovating a classified building. Thanks to his involvement, we benefited from an immediate interest, which has been very welcome—but it wasn’t our original intention.”

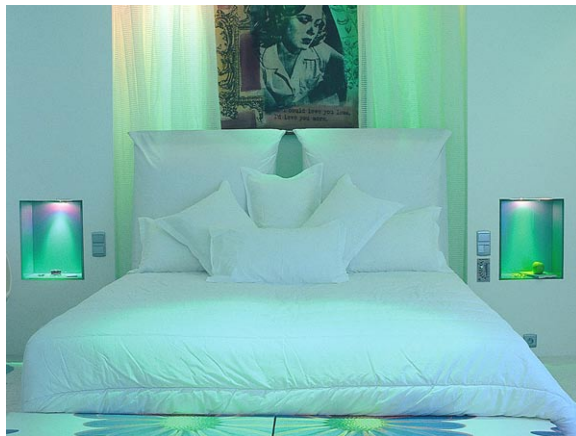
Call it serendipity, then. Inside, the bakery’s original features are accentuated through dramatic contrasts of color and texture. Check-in has you craning to admire the vintage rustics painted on the ceiling. The lobby is vibrant in touchy-feely raspberry and gold needlepoint. Along the staircase (a solid, timber affair from around 1615), mirrors play with perspective and light. Polka dots underfoot lead to the seventeen rooms, which take their individual themes from large-scale “collage frescoes,” an innovative use of screen-printed industrial plastic.

“We gave Monsieur Lacroix carte blanche; that’s what gives the hotel its unique style,” explains Murano. “For him, it was really a coup de cœur. He took a lot of inspiration from working with an intimate building, full of history, and set in a rich historical area.”

Too eclectic for your taste? No problem: lovers of clean-lined, urban chic never had it so good. Set in an area that is becoming less “louche” by the week, the **Murano Urban Resort** (13 Blvd du Temple, 3rd, [www.muranoresort.com](http://www.muranoresort.com))

is well placed for Marais strolls and cultural forays. Yet, as the “resort” tag suggests, that may call for some willpower on your part.

By day, the Murano’s atrium lounge manages to be simultaneously ultra-cool and cozy, with its white marble and open fire running the length of the wall. By night, the space for night is bathed in color and DJ sound, becoming an extension of the funky, slate-clad bar. When it’s time to beat a retreat, it’s to a room that blends pop art glamour with “zen” (shown). Movie icons gaze down from white walls, and adjustable light schemes allow you to be in the pink at the flick of a switch. Add to that a range of facilities geared towards the business of pleasure (or vice versa), and—should you be in a position to splurge—suites equipped with their own ter-



race and pool.

The Murano has some real claim to have helped turn around an unfashionable neighborhood. An even bigger miracle is required of its brand new sister hotel, **Le Kube** (1-5 Passage Ruelle, 18th, [www.kubehotel.com](http://www.kubehotel.com)). The Gare du Nord/La Chapelle area is hardly renowned for its style, but this hip oasis sets out to compensate generously. The location benefits from excellent access to Roissy airport and Eurostar.

Sheltered in its private courtyard, Le Kube’s interior is edgy, even avant-garde. In contrast to its matte-black corridors, the rooms are refreshingly light and airy. Mostly cubic (of course), they’re boldly designed to maximize space thanks to a diagonal, open-plan layout, while fun-fur curtains and “ice-cube” furniture inject a little fun into the high-tech décor. The hotel also boasts the city’s first ice bar, aimed squarely at the young or eternally cool, where you can savor vodkas in an ambient temperature of minus 5, cocooned in the hotel’s courtesy coat.

What’s driving the trend for innovation? The catalyst, admits Le Murano’s Patricia van de Reysen, was 9/11: “It’s true that it called for a change in attitude. With a decline in visitors

to the city, there was a clear need for hospitality that offered something different, extra—more ‘New Yorkais’ in style and tone.”

Happily, attitude isn’t limited to the pricier hotels. **Le Général** (5-7 Rue Rampon, 11th, [www.legeneralhotel.com](http://www.legeneralhotel.com)) belies its regimental name and strives not to conform. There’s barely time to take in the snappy white and fuchsia styling before check-in is completed—from the comfort of a sofa. It’s an informal approach, which is “better for guests, better for us,” says management.

Sleek, uncluttered rooms are personalized with thoughtful, quirky details—shiny apples on the pillow, a rubber duck for bath-time. Throw in an attractive bar with boxy seats and a crystal chess set, free WiFi access and a health suite, and it becomes more apparent why the forty-seven-room, three-star Général has upbeat guests apparently competing for originality in the “comments” book.

“Eclectic” and “hip” may dominate the Paris hotel renaissance, but even they don’t make up the whole picture. My last jigsaw piece falls into place back in the historic center where **Le Marais House** (a stone’s throw from the city’s oldest house, 3rd, [www.maraishouse.com](http://www.maraishouse.com)) is carving out a niche all its own. Technically, it’s not quite in the Marais. Nor is it strictly a hotel—more of a cross between a hôtel particulier and a prestige bed & breakfast. But it qualifies amply because Yann-Gabriel Hentschke’s meticulously restored interior breaks the mold—and positively exudes attitude.

“This was really the bourgeois end of the street. Basically, I recreated a house that never existed,” says Hentschke, who lovingly tracked down the raw materials to transform a derelict shell into a chateau-in-miniature. Ushering me up the finely wrought staircase into a ferny, glass-floored atrium, he points out eighteenth-century Venetian painted doors. There are stone floors, circa sixteen-something, brought back from Poitiers and Tourenne. The fireplaces date mostly from the same era. The result is glorious, right down to the light-play on the Bevilacqua walls, the mahogany-paneled gym-cum-sauna and the four-poster beds. Carefully selected antiques complete the effect, and go some way towards explaining Hentschke’s policy of disclosing the exact location when guests reserve.

With only five rooms, one of which functions as a suite, intimacy is guaranteed. But so, predictably, is privacy—look behind the carved oak doors for the elevator that accesses each room. Downstairs, where breakfast is served under fifteenth-century vaults, I struggle to picture the surroundings as they might have been a decade or two ago. Then, the building was a gold-leaf workshop where craftsmen turned out the traditional lettered facades for artisan shop-fronts. “Pains français, viennois, seigle et gruau”? Perhaps.

—By Amanda MacKenzie

## Culture Bière

By Vivian Thomas

On a warm June evening in 2004, I joined a group of journalists at a memorable dinner in a private mansion near the Invalides. In the walled garden, candles flickered around the fountain; inside, a dozen flower-decked tables filled three rooms whose French doors opened onto the terrace.

I was seated at a table with chef Yves Camdeborde and fromagère Marie Quatrehomme, both of whom had contributed their expertise to what turned out to be a most unusual meal. From Camdeborde's first course through Christian Le Squer's main dish, Quatrehomme's hand-picked cheeses and a chocolate dessert by Lenôtre, every dish had been created to pair with a different beer. That beverage was served like wine, in stem glasses, with each brew increasing in color, flavor and strength as the meal progressed: from Wieckse Witte, a delicate white beer, through a "bière blonde" by Affligem and George Killian's amber beer to the robust Pelforth Brune.

The dinner, sponsored by Heineken, who owns those breweries, launched a marketing effort called "Bière Côté Repas." The four beers, packaged in large bottles with labels suggesting complementary dishes, were at first sold only in restaurants and at the Bon Marché's Grande Epicerie. Now, in a continuing effort to bolster sagging beer sales, Heineken has created the city's first beer concept store. Culture Bière is a spacious three-level showplace on the Champs-Élysées that includes two bars, a lunch counter, a restaurant and a boutique. It opened last summer and bravely promotes beer in the land of fine wines.

On the main floor, a bar near the entrance offers six brews on tap; opposite it is a counter where you can buy Brassin, a new draft-beer-to-go that's pumped into a clear glass bottle while you watch and sealed with a special cap that keeps it fizzy for up to five days.

The boutique sells the full line of brews (including four new low-alcohol

beers), beer-friendly snacks and collectibles: trays, coasters, logo mugs and gadgets galore. Many items come in the same four colors as the beer: there are white, gold, amber and brown scented candles, glass votive holders and ceramic tableware. There's a handsome line of glasses, some of them reproductions of seventeenth-century models, a shelf of books, and surprises like beer-based sorbets, jars of apricots stewed in amber beer, and even shower gels and body lotions made with barley extract.

Beyond the boutique is Le Comptoir, a casual restaurant with long counters and bar stools where "caisettes du brasseur," quick, prix-fixe menus, are available. Downstairs in "Le Lounge," an impressive eighteen-meter (fifty-nine-foot) glass bar backed by a changing video display takes up the entire wall. Open all day starting at noon, the Lounge offers light three-course meals as well as music every evening—jazz and Gospel on Mondays, a DJ on Saturdays.

Upstairs, a handsome restaurant provides a tree-level view over the Champs-Élysées, and here the "Bière Côté Repas" concept comes into its own. Each menu item has a suggested beer, with such combos as white beer with delicate chèvre brioche, and dark beer with a spicy tagine. You can also mix and match—my hearty souris d'agneau paired well with a glass of Brassin, with its flavors of honey and fruit.

Another plus: the Lounge and Comptoir serve food all day long; the restaurant closes between lunch and dinner during the week, but serves all day on weekends. It's a perfect spot for Champs-Élysées shoppers to rest and refuel before heading to the new Lancel or Louis Vuitton boutiques.

•Culture Bière: 65 Ave des Champs-Élysées, 8th. Tel: 1-42-56-88-88. Open daily, 10:30am-2am. Site: [www.culturebiere.com](http://www.culturebiere.com).



## ▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

## Musée Nissim de Camondo

By Amanda MacKenzie

In a city that boasts more than its fair share of glittering interiors, you can be forgiven for being a little blasé now and then. Silk chinoiserie? Check. Flemish school? Check. Which is why, on such days, you might do well to cross Parc Monceau to the Musée Nissim de Camondo, an often-overlooked hôtel particulier that first opened its doors to the public seventy years ago. I can't guarantee you'll be dazzled by its elegant décor and assembled treasures (though, naturally, you will be). But if you're left untouched by its air of intimacy and the ghosts of its past, then you are made of stern stuff indeed.

The entrance is via a courtyard, accessed by the street. That's rather a pity, since the 1914 house, modeled on the Petit Trianon at Versailles, hides its best profile behind Monceau's greenery. No matter; it's imposing enough for you to picture the sleek cars that once lined the drive when Monsieur le Comte, Moïse de Camondo, was at the height of his influence and hospitality.

Known as the "Rothschilds of the East," his family consisted of Sephardic Jewish bankers who made their fortune in Constantinople, their title in Italy and their home in Paris. Moïse and his cousin, Isaac, inherited their respective fathers' passion for collecting, and the means to do so. Isaac's largesse still benefits the Impressionist line-up at the Musée d'Orsay today. Moïse spent elegantly, and it's his remarkable lifetime's collection of mid- to late-eighteenth-century furnishings and objets d'art that unfolds as you climb the white stone staircase.

Revealed upstairs is an unerringly exquisite taste, calculated to captivate, never to overwhelm. The Salle à Manger, with its cool green paneling and Sèvres "Buffon" services, evokes gentlemen's club bonhomie and art lovers' anecdotes. In the Salon des Huet, where matching pastoral scenes adorn rotunda walls, the "de Camondo touch" is especially

irresistible.

Moïse's meticulous acquisition intensified after his adored son, Nissim, died in action as a French reconnaissance pilot in World War I. The young man's image haunts the house; framed photographs show him on leave, good-looking, affecting nonchalance. In his will, Moïse left the house and its contents to the nation—on condition that they be preserved intact and bear Nissim's name. The memorial later took on a more poignant resonance than the old man could have predicted. His remaining kin—daughter Béatrice, her husband and two children—were deported to Auschwitz, and perished there around 1944.

As mansions go, Nissim de Camondo is not vast—still, purists can comfortably while away an afternoon in the company of their audioguides. Alternatively, you can simply allow yourself to be swept along by the gorgeous homogeneousness of it all. From the Savonnerie carpets to the rock crystal chandeliers, every piece was hand picked by Moïse to chime harmoniously with its surroundings. Practically everything comes from a tightly defined era; little has changed since his death.

You leave the house with a tour of the service quarters downstairs. Recently renovated, they're dominated by two magnificent cast iron ranges. With copper pans neatly stacked in the scullery, bottled pears and apricots standing ready, it's as though the servants have been given an hour off. In their dining room, the table is set as it might have been in 1935, when the house was last inhabited. Germany has reintroduced conscription; there's talk of the new Nuremberg Laws. You can almost hear the whispers.

•Musée Nissim de Camondo: 63 Rue de Monceau, 8th. Open: Wed-Sun, 10am-5pm. Site: [www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr).



# CONSTANT MOTION

Is super chef Christian Constant part of a dying breed? He thinks so

It's the day before New Year's Eve and in Christian Constant's kitchen a young Japanese apprentice is stuffing corn-fed chickens under the skin with truffle-laced pork fat, filling their cavities with little boudins and trussing the birds with a giant needle and string.

Constant shows him the classic French technique once, crisscrossing the string inside the chicken to make it invisible. "Got it?" he asks the apprentice, who nods nervously, barely able to answer in French. Alone he struggles with the second one before tackling the pile of chickens with growing confidence, diving for the slippery little sausages that keep popping out.

In the lull between Christmas and New Year's the roomy kitchen of **Le Violon d'Ingres** (135 Rue St-Dominique, 7th, tel: 1-45-55-15 05, [www.leviolondingres.com](http://www.leviolondingres.com)) is unusually quiet, and Constant keeps apologizing for the relative lack of action. It looks busy enough to me: chef Stéphane Schmidt nurses eight pans containing different sauces, a giant pot of pumpkin soup bubbles away on a gas burner, and another cook painstakingly wraps a monkfish tail in overlapping slices of bacon before slicing it into perfect rounds. Apprentices are tearing roots off huge colanders of lamb's lettuce, slivering onions on an electric meat slicer and preparing trays of langues de chats to perch in pots of homemade chocolate mousse.

The vigorous Constant seems to be everywhere, sipping coffee as he talks to me but also lifting saucepan lids, consulting with Schmidt, glancing at his mail, warning the onion-slicing apprentice to watch her fingertips, and checking on the number of lunch reservations. Frequently he dashes between **Le Violon d'Ingres** and his two more casual restaurants in Rue St-Dominique, **Le Café Constant** (139 Rue St-Dominique, 7th, tel: 1-47-53-73-34) and **Les Fables de la Fontaine** (131 Rue St-Dominique, 7th, tel: 1-44-18-37-55). Each of these bistros has its own kitchen, but most of the preparation takes place in the more spacious quarters of **Le Violon d'Ingres**. Constant employs twenty people in the three restaurants and serves at least 200 customers a day.

At 55 years old, however—and with barely a gray hair to show for it—he is acknowledging that it's time to hand over the reins to those he has so conscientiously trained. Like most French chefs of his generation, he started work at 14—first in his native Basque region, then on the Côte d'Azur and finally in Paris at **Chez les Anges**, **Ledoyen**, the **Ritz** and **Le Crillon**. At **Le Crillon**, something extraordinary happened when he was put in charge of the kitchens. One by one, the young chefs who worked for him

went on to open their own influential bistros. Ten years later, their names read like a hit list of the best-value restaurants in Paris: **Le Comptoir du Relais**, **Chez Michel**, **L'Os à Moelle**, **Le Repaire de Cartouche**, **Le Troquet**. Only Eric Fréchon, who left **Le Crillon** to run a successful bistro in the 19th arrondissement, has returned to haute cuisine (as chef at **Le Bristol**).

So what exactly happened at **Le Crillon** to make chefs such as Fréchon, Yves Camdeborde and Christian Etchebest continue to speak so nostalgically of "Monsieur Constant"?

"During that period I met young cooks who were talented and hard-working," says Constant. "If you're smart and you understand quickly, you pick up the basics as you work. You can't doze off—you have to be fast, clean, neat and respect-



ful. I consider myself straight and fair. Mistakes happen, but I like rigor. If I say something, then I am right. Or, at least, I am rarely wrong."

Perhaps as important as Constant's work ethic, though, is his ability to relax. "You have to know how to have fun—to eat and drink together and be friends. I like to compare it to a rugby team."

Those who worked with Constant have retained his approach, never taking shortcuts in their cooking and giving their sous-chefs enough confidence to go off and open their own restaurants (Stéphane Jégo of **L'Ami Jean** and Sylvain Danière of **L'Ourcine** both worked with Yves Camdeborde before opening similar bistros). Still, for someone who has trained so many modern bistro chefs, I found Constant to be surprisingly old school in some ways.

"The cooks I meet today who start working at age 22 are not motivated enough," he says. "I was 14 years old when I started and I wasn't entitled to any rest. I got my backside kicked with both feet and it didn't kill me. Now it's nearly impossible to find young French people who want to work. All they care about is the salary and the holidays.

"I like the way the Japanese work. They are straight and they don't cheat. A few years ago, they used to come and apprentice for free so that they could open their own restaurants in Japan. Now I have to pay them. Soon, Tokyo will be full of Christian Constant bistros and you'll find better French food there than in Paris."

Depressingly, Constant feels that he is part of a dying breed. "The state doesn't help small artisans and the hygiene regulations are difficult to respect in Paris. I recently told some English customers that we are living the last ten years of traditional French cooking. Restaurants will all buy their crème brûlées from the same place and everyone will eat the same thing."

Having made this gloomy prediction, Constant goes back to the business at hand: delivering hot dishes and desserts to **Le Café Constant** before lunch. **Le Violon d'Ingres**, he says, has never fully recovered from the drop in tourism after 9/11—until then, forty per cent of its customers were American. Two years ago, he opened **Le Café Constant** and the fish bistro **Les Fables de la Fontaine**, which is run by his nephew. As I watch him dart among the three, it's obvious that he has a soft spot for **Le Café Constant**. This is where he likes to perch at the bar and survey the scene with his sharp eye; this is where he eats lunch around 2:30pm, when the rush is over.

"I was raised in a family that wasn't very rich and I like to bring pleasure to people who might not have the means to come to **Le Violon d'Ingres**. Here, they can order hachis parmentier and they know it will be good and not expensive. I can also talk to the customers more easily in this setting."

**Le Café Constant** doesn't take reservations and from 12:30pm onwards customers stream through the door. Since most Parisians are on holiday, about half of the diners are English-speaking. The rest, many of them solo, look like regulars. One elderly woman takes a seat at 2:45pm, fifteen minutes after the waiters have started to turn people away. Constant chuckles: "She comes every day at this time and orders the plat du jour. She's not difficult, so we don't argue. It's probably her only meal of the day."

When the crowd starts to thin, Constant digs into a plate of sausage and mashed potato while I polish off lentils with pork, pike-perch quenelles and crème caramel, all the type of honest food that tourists dream of when they come to Paris but now so rarely find. Then Constant lights up a cigar and leans back with a satisfied smile. His day started at 8am and won't finish until after midnight, but this is one workaholic who hasn't forgotten how to enjoy life. "I have one cigar a day," he says. "This is my reward."

—By Rosa Jackson

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is recessed; walls are unadorned. The open plan of the ground floor counterbalances the numerous nooks upstairs, intended for discreet rendezvous. Portzamparc also designed the furnishings, most notably the blocky chairs with distinct, curvaceous seatbacks (think lips or breasts). But by far, Café Beaubourg's most original characteristic is its lack of a bar in the middle of the room. The disappearance of this customary café anchor, a design decision the architect undoubtedly reached in conversation with his clients, precipitated another mini revolution—mandatory table service and the obsolescence of the time-honored, two-tiered system of beverage tariffs, one for those who imbibed while standing and the other for those who did so sitting. To the frères Costes, drinking on the go became a no-no, in part, perhaps, because it meant lower revenues. Everyone who frequents Costes establishments forks over the same hefty amount for beverages (usually euros more than at less fashionable watering holes), all dutifully served by fetching young men or women dressed to the nines.

The other trailblazing ingredient to the success of Café Beaubourg—and the Costes kingdom, as a whole—is its menu. Gilbert and Jean-Louis are not purveyors of innovative gastronomy. Their culinary offerings are purposefully unadventurous, a mélange of standards (omelets and croque monsieur or madame) and international fusion favorites (steamed vegetable plates, shrimp with Thai herbs, salads of every stripe). In a word: comfort food. “Our cuisine is designed for women,” Jean-Louis discloses unabashedly. (I would venture that it also appeals to body-conscious gay men and metrosexuals.) To this end, the “plat du jour” has been banished—too complicated and costly—not to mention sauces—too caloric. Portions are micro but always aesthetically presented, invariably on monochrome, square plates that scream “contemporary” and never with more than one garnish (Jean-Louis’ pet peeve). “All of the dishes are really small and not terribly serious,” Joan Juliet Buck, former editor-in-chief of French Vogue, maintains. Putman sarcastically contends: “They have certainly helped to keep the Parisian population slim.” Despite the criticisms, the Costes menu, available in slight variations under every Costes roof, is a crowd pleaser, because its basic chow is available around the clock. You eat whenever you fancy. This accommodating approach, combined with a policy of never rushing clients to vacate their tables, has made Café Beaubourg and its Costes offshoots ideal places to linger; one can leisurely gossip, sip or snack (three-course meals are anathema) while cataloguing the endless array of what the French call “pipole”—the stunning, the stylish, the noteworthy.

Café Beaubourg secured the frères Costes a coveted place among Paris’ cultural elite and set an unimpeachable standard, which they have duplicated faultlessly. The otherwise tight-lipped Jean-Louis acknowledges one of the key factors to their ascent: “A famous politician told me, ‘You’re just a tiny bit better than all the other

places, and that’s why we come.’ Chez nous, you won’t find much that pisses you off.” Such influential contacts have proven essential to the expansion of the Costes empire. In 1993, for example, the brothers received permission from the State to set up shop in the Louvre. On the ground floor of the Richelieu wing overlooking Pei’s pyramid, they installed the swank Café Marly, just in time to commemorate the museum’s 200th anniversary. For the occasion, they commissioned Olivier Gagnère to create a décor that would compliment the sumptuous architecture. An admirer of Neoclassicism, the designer invoked the elegance and lavish splendor of the Second Empire (1852-70), when Napoleon III occupied the royal apartments directly over the café. Gagnère hung burgundy velvet draperies, which accentuate the lofty, carved ceilings and towering columns. A suite of furniture, also his handiwork, animates both the interior and the vast terrace. Chairs as well as banquettes are dressed in claret-colored slipcovers and arranged around elegant tables, all in rich woods, their fluid lines and harmonious forms as modern today as they would have been in the mid-nineteenth century. With its exceptional address, unique décor and a clientele of both discerning, chic Parisians and trendy tourists, Café Marly is the exemplar of the Costes’ triumph.

Never ones to rest on their laurels, the frères Costes decided to branch out into the hotel business after opening Café Marly. In 1995, they inaugurated the four-star Hôtel Costes. In keeping with their formula, they hired renowned decorator Jacques Garcia to refurbish the interior. “The building was extremely ordinary,” he remembers. “It had neither grace nor charm.” Garcia, however, let his imagination run riot and transformed the space into a theatrical stage set where opulence and intimacy reign. Like Gagnère, he resuscitated an eclectic mix of styles and motifs popular under Napoleon III. Around an interior courtyard with patio-like furniture outfitted in retro sixties prints, he fashioned five distinct reception areas for dining and drinking, ideal for lounge lizards. Gilt mirrors mounted on boiserie and stuccoed ceilings with crystal chandeliers in one area give way to Greco-Roman prints framed by Egyptian-like columns or an herbarium theme in others. Surfaces, patterns and materials playfully clash but remain unified in their cacophony thanks to Garcia’s signature velvet—deep crimson covers his Second Empire-style buttoned sofas and studded, fringed chairs.

As if Garcia’s eye-popping décor was not enough, Jean-Louis and Gilbert also engaged DJ Stéphane Pompougnac to thicken the atmosphere with a funky soundtrack of house and down-tempo tunes. Played discreetly throughout, these rhythms imbue the interior with an edgy, club-like feel. The innovation has proven so winning that “audio décor” has become an indispensable element of Costes style. (To date, Pompougnac has produced eight different CDs available for purchase exclusively at Costes locations. The first four are said to have sold over 800,000 copies.) Pushing their branding scheme even further, the frères Costes have also

developed a luxury line of Hôtel Costes fragrance, bath and body products. While sleeping quarters are modest in size and expensive (they begin at around \$500 a night), the total experience or “scene” Gilbert and Jean-Louis offer has made Hôtel Costes a mandatory destination for celebrities and jetsetters. In this intimate setting, no one goes unnoticed, and that’s precisely the point. (Garcia has gone on to decorate a string of other Costes enterprises, including L’Avenue, L’Esplanade, Café Ruc, Le Murat and La Grande Armée.)

In the new millennium, with the assistance of Gilbert’s son, Thierry, the Costes conquest continues. In 2000, they opened Georges, a spacious, sleek restaurant on top of the Pompidou Center. With spectacular views, it comprises the requisite dazzling décor (the floor and grotto-like enclosures are covered in an aluminum skin) in which new age fare and cocktails are served to a pulsating beat. The high-end hotel Costes K on Avenue Kléber opened its doors around the same time. Its seductively minimalist, marble-clad lobby, the work of Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill, displays a stunning collection of museum-quality contemporary furniture (Le Corbusier black leather fauteuils, Noguchi glass-topped tables, Roger Tallon steel and foam chairs). In 2002, in an attempt to seduce a younger, more avant-garde clientele, Thierry launched the ultra-trendy Etienne Marcel on the street of the same name south of the garment district. As the house DJ serenades, twenty-something fashion aficionados and creative types recline in chunky white fiberglass bucket seats, circa 1970s, amid a Technicolor, typography-tinged décor conceived by artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno in collaboration with a graphic design team.

Ian Schrager, New York’s luxury hotel kingpin, says of his Paris counterparts: “I don’t know anyone else out there doing it as well as them. And they keep doing it. They don’t seem to lose the zest for doing new things that blow people away.” The frères Costes have ensured their supremacy in the cutthroat Parisian café-restaurant world largely because they also own controlling interests in most of the subsidiaries that stock their enterprises with food and drink. This brilliant strategy keeps overhead to a minimum and maximizes profits.

Costes style has proven spectacularly Costes effective. The revolution they initiated over two decades ago shows no signs of abating. Some, however, grumble that their formula has become too formulaic, and the Costes style looks like a caricature of itself. Copycat cafés don’t help the Costes cause. Demurely lit, spruced-up, lounge-like, they are often clumsy imitators. Their proliferation, furthermore, promises to breed uniformity and boredom. For better or worse, the frères Costes continue to alter the face of Paris, and their resounding success has sounded the death knell of the rustic, old-fashioned café with its wooden or marble tables, Thonet chairs and traditional prix-fixe menu. Whatever the final outcome, the frères Costes, like the corner bistro, are part of Paris history. And as Jean-Louis proclaims, “Paris without us—well, that would be rather a different story.”

PICK OF THE MONTH

**Pierre Bonnard, 1867-1947**

Well, it was certainly worth waiting two years for this. After an extensive renovation, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris reopens with a splendid exposition of the work of Pierre Bonnard. Why Bonnard? Perhaps because he is so much more than he seems to be at first glance—just take your time and look closely. Here is not only a fine technique and a savvy flourish of the brush but also a sort of Proustian flashback of things we dreamed of. •Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Until May 7. Site: [www.mam.paris.fr](http://www.mam.paris.fr).

ON THIS MONTH

**Ingres, 1780-1867**

A luscious expo of eighty paintings and 104 drawings shows Ingres at his very best. Quite simply, stunning. •Musée du Louvre. Until May 15. Site: [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr).

**The Phillips Collection**

Renoir, Matisse, Van Gogh, Bonnard, Gauguin, Nicolas de Staël and Picasso: sixty splendid examples of French painting and sculpture from the Duncan Phillips collection. The Musée du Luxembourg has become home to some of the finest temporary exhibitions in Paris. •Musée du Luxembourg. Until March 26. Site: [www.museeduluxembourg.fr](http://www.museeduluxembourg.fr).

**Cartier-Bresson Portraits**

Here they are. Around ninety photos of famous faces. Henri Cartier-Bresson was merciless; he aimed his camera and shot them down: François Mauriac, Martin Luther King or François Mitterrand, they were all the same to him—they were all just splendid faces. This is a very good show. •Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson. Until April 9. Site: [www.henricartierbresson.org](http://www.henricartierbresson.org).

**Charlotte Perriand, 1903-1999**

This is a fine retrospective of Perriand's work as an interior designer as well as architectural and urban activist: furniture, architectural plans and drawings, videos and filmed interviews. •Centre Pompidou, Galerie 2. Until March 27. Site: [www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr).

**Chinese Erotica**

Curious and fabulous, these dainty paintings are delightfully wicked. •Musée Cernuschi, 8th. Until May 7. Site: [www.paris.fr/musees](http://www.paris.fr/musees).

**Cézanne and Pissarro, 1865-1885**

This exhibit displays the artistic relationship between Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro during their twenty-year friendship. •Musée d'Orsay. Until May 28. Site: [www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr).

**Photos**

"L'Age d'Or de la Coupole," the Golden Age of the Coupole. On first sight, this seems to be a rather dreary collection of black and white photographs of forgotten faces in a grand café. However, a closer look reveals Matisse, Cocteau, Piaf, Sartre, Prévert and all sorts of other celebrities dining and having fun. A rather sad little trip down memory lane, but even so, quite amusing. •La Coupole, 102 Blvd du Montparnasse, 14th. Until April 20. Free.

**Sacred Texts**

Manuscripts, texts and documents. Three thousand years of history and myth: the Torah, the Bible and the Koran. •Bibliothèque Nationale de France-François Mitterrand. Until April 30. Site: [www.bnf.fr](http://www.bnf.fr).

**Luxurious Publicity**

Twenty years of refined folly: the work of Jean Larivière for Louis Vuitton, Charles Jourdan and other deluxe products. •Musée de la Publicité. Until March 26. Site: [www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr).

**Are Men What They Wear?**

From the time of Louis XIV, when French fashions first influenced European court clothes, until the present, this is the story of men and their clothes: military, official, formal and outrageous. •Musée de la Mode et du Textile. Until April 30. Site: [www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr).

**African Brazil**

Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries some four million African slaves were shipped to Brazil, carrying with them the cultural heritage of the Yoruba, Fon/Ewe and Bantou kingdoms: this is their mysterious and magical work. •Musée Dapper. Until March 26. Site: [www.dapper.fr](http://www.dapper.fr).

**Le Smoking**

Called "Smoking Forever" this is an elegant display of formal evening wear, "Le Smoking," by Yves Saint-Laurent. Both men's and women's. •Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint-Laurent. Until April 23. Site: [www.ysl-haute couture.com](http://www.ysl-haute couture.com).

**Palais de Tokyo**

This is said to be a place of experimentation and innovation—open from noon to midnight, it offers expos, events, encounters, videos and music. The current exhibit shows the work of Wang Du, Kader Attia, Barthélémy Toguo and others. •Palais de Tokyo. Until May 7. Site: [www.palaisdetokyo.com](http://www.palaisdetokyo.com).

**Design**

Hervé Van der Straeten is shown as more than just a designer of Dior perfume bottles: here he has the right stuff for creating original works of art. A little odd, but certainly a worthy artisan, this is a creator worth seeing. •Galerie Hervé Van der Straeten, 11 Rue Ferdinand-Duval, 4th. Until April 30. Free.

**Paris and the Cinema**

Filmmakers, film critics and academics will present Paris in avant-garde 1920s and New Wave cinema. Extracts from films and discussion. •Ecole du Louvre, 99 Rue de Rivoli, 1st. Until May 19. Site: [www.ecoledulouvre.fr](http://www.ecoledulouvre.fr). Free.

COMING SOON

**30th Annual Paris Marathon**

From the Champs-Élysées, east across the city and back, 42.195 kilometers. 35,000 runners expected. •April 9. 8:45am start. Site: [www.parismarathon.com](http://www.parismarathon.com).

**L'Orangerie des Tuileries**

Claude Monet's water lilies and other treasures from the Impressionists to Picasso will be on view in May, when the museum is scheduled to reopen after a five-year restoration.

**New Museum**

The inauguration of the much anticipated museum for the "primitive arts," the Musée du Quai Branly (designed by famed French architect Jean Nouvel), is promised for June 23. Site: [www.quaibrany.fr](http://www.quaibrany.fr).

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